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Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER & MELVIN J. LASKY

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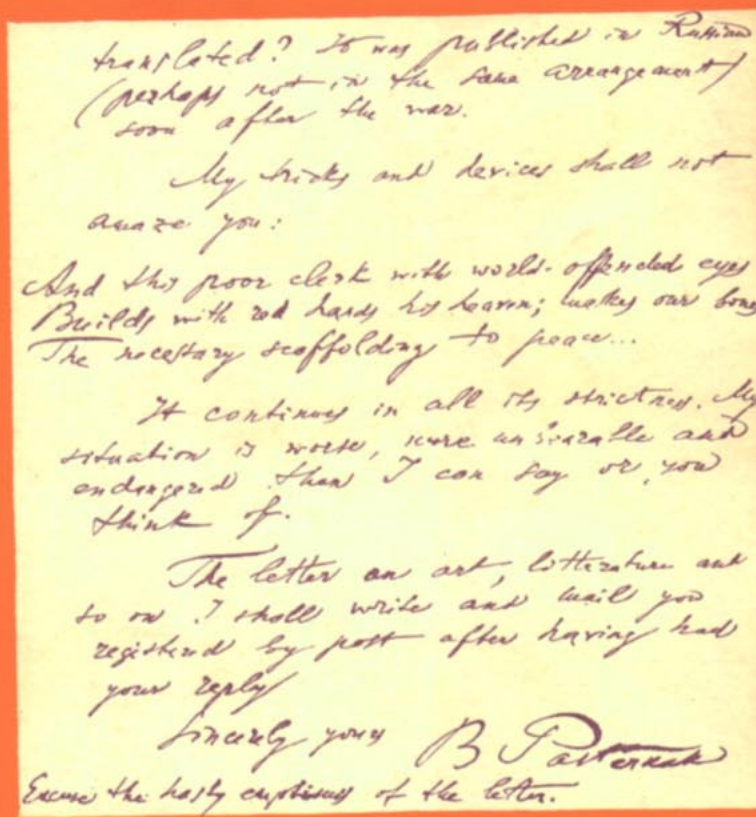

translated? It was published in Russia (perhaps not in the same arrangement) soon after the war.

My thirsty and devices shall not amaze you:

And the poor clerk with world-offended eyes
Builds with red hands his heavenly scaffolding
The necessary scaffolding to peace...

It continues in all its strictness. My situation is worse, more unbearable and endangered than I can say or you think of.

The letter on art, literature and so on I shall write and mail you registered by post after having had your reply

Sincerely yours B Pasternak

Excuse the hasty craftiness of the letter.

THREE LETTERS FROM BORIS PASTERNAK

AUGUST 1960 83 MONTHLY 3s. 6d.

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Encounter

edited by STEPHEN SPENDER *and* MELVIN J. LASKY

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CHATTO & WINDUS

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Three Letters

August 9, 1959

I AM honoured enormously by your letter giving rise to mutual personal acquaintance.

A rare opportunity presents itself to accelerate and secure my answer. It must be used to-day—no: within an hour.

The question about Mr. Edm. Wilson's explanatory notes to *Dr. Zh.* is for me not of such flat categorical importance as a chain of talks, penslips in letters and inaccurately transmitted reports seems to be susceptible to ascribe them to. I did not see the April Number of ENCOUNTER where the study was published, I was only spoken about it in letters from America, West Germany, and France. (By the way: the article by Stuart Hampshire was excellent, especially his unawaited, uncommon, and nevertheless true and sharp insight on Shakespeare's influence.)

Edm. Wilson is a great name to me, a real judge and interesting writer on artistic matters. I was flattered on hearing him to have a notion of me. I have no reason to enter into an argument with him. What is poetry—understanding? Can there be a right one, a false one?

BORIS PASTERNAK, *whose death in Peredelkino occurred on 30th May, wrote these letters—by hand, and in English—to Stephen Spender.*

But it should be a great pleasure for me to write a few pages for ENCOUNTER in the only form I can allow myself (even that one being a very stretched admission). I shall write you a personal letter touching that, alien to me, detailed allegorical interpretation of literature as a point of contiguity to deeper and more essential reflections. It must remain a letter, it is not permitted to become an article manifestly composed by myself. That is to say: an other contributor of your monthly (not you, God forbid.... I dare not admit that more trouble and pain and burdens should fall upon you by my fault beside your numberless own)—another member of the editorship, if willing, must use the essence of the letter *in quotations* (having translated my gibberish in true English) and present the whole as his own composition with my, contracted from my letters, content or stuffing.

A possibility to have a short article of mine as such, as an article openly written and signed by me and also to be printed, is on hand. It is my short essay on Fr. Chopin, written more than ten years ago in Russian. I have sent a manuscript of it to Mr. Richard Newnham for the Penguin Books. If it should be interesting for you and the Penguins would consent, would you not be willing to insert in the paper these two or three columns translated? It was published in Russian (perhaps not in the same arrangement) soon after the war.

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My tricks and devices shall not amaze you:

And this poor clerk with world-offended eyes
Builds with red hands his heaven; makes our bones
The necessary scaffolding to peace . . .

It continues in all its strictness. My situation is worse, more unbearable and endangered than I can say or you think of.

The letter on art, literature, and so on, I shall write and mail you registered by post after having had your reply.

Sincerely yours,

B. Pasternak

Excuse the hasty emptiness of the letter.

II

August 22, 1959

It is, as I said last time, a great pleasure, honour, and thrill for me to write you. But I am aware of the onus that will fall on the person you will choose and entrust with my letter to find out the sense of its gibberish and to transform it in the English shape when using it to literary purpose.

I have no other debts to Mr. Edmund Wilson* than to pay him gratitude and admiration. Each critic's right is to comment the impression produced on him by a work of art in the manner he likes it or is accustomed to. I am asked to write brief prefaces, introductory accounts, preambling editions, selections, performances of Bloch (for Italy), of Tolstoy and Lermontov (for America), of Chekhov (for India).

I am no explorer, no erudite. I have read very little in my life, and what I have read, I have it for the most part forgotten. I shall write all them short letters on the many topics, conveying only my general subjective idea on the matter, just so as Mr. Wilson does on my behalf.

If I say, for instance, Chekhov's singularity as a playwright and the chief merit and value of his plays consisted in his having inscribed man in a landscape on equal terms with trees and clouds; that as a dramatist he was against the over-rating of the social and the human; that the conversational texts of the plays are not written in obedience to any logic of interests, passion, characters, or plots, but that the cues and speeches are taken and snatched out of the space and the air they were spoken, like spots and strokes of a forest or a meadow only to render the true simultaneous resemblance by the subject of the play; to life in the far broader sense of a unique vast inhabited frame, to its symmetries and dissymmetries, proportions and disproportions—to life as a hidden mysterious principle on the whole.

If Chekhov should live and have read these words, would he ever consent? Why should Mr. Wilson's liberty and licences be less than mine?

Only I don't esteem accessories and details of such an importance. Rather their comparative *indifference* has a special deliberate meaning, being one of the means of my language, the real tongue of my thought.

When we take the great novel of the last century in its essence, extolled and idolised, for instance, by Henry James. When we examine the greatest, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Dickens, Flaubert. When from the fabric of a *Madame Bovary*, we gradually, one after another, subtract characters, their development, situations, occurrences, the plot, the subject, the content. . . . The second-rate diverting literature will leave no remainder after such a subtraction. But the name creation (or, for example, *David Copperfield*) lets remain the *cardinal*: the characterisation of reality as such; almost as of a philosophic category; as a member or link of our minds' universe; as life's perpetual companion and surroundings.

For this characterisation of reality of the being, as a substratum, as a common background, the nineteenth century applied the incontestable doctrine of causality, the belief that the objectivity was determined and ruled by an iron chain of causes and effects, that all appearances of the moral and material world were subordinate to the law of sequels and retributions. And the severer and more inflexible was an author in showing such con-

* Edmund Wilson, "Legend and Symbol in Dr. Zhivago," Encounter, 1959, The earlier reference is to Stuart Hampshire's "Doctor Zhivago; As from a Lost Culture," Encounter, November, 1958.—Ed.

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sequences (of characters and conducts) the greater a realist he was esteemed. The tragic bewitching spell of Flaubert's style or Maupassant's manner roots in the fact that their narratives are irrevocable like verdicts or sentences, beyond recall.

I also from my earliest years have been struck by the observation that existence was more original, extraordinary, and inexplicable than any of its separate astonishing incidents and facts. I was attracted by the unusualness of the usual. Composing music, prose, or poetry I was driven by definite conceptions and motifs, I pursued certain favourite objects and themes. But the top pleasure consists in having hit the sense or taste of reality, in having been able, in having succeeded in rendering the *atmosphere of being*, the surrounding whole, the total environment, the frame, where the particular and depicted thing is having been plunged and floating.

But curiously enough, while pondering over the distinctive notes or features of *life perception* (of recognised *existence*) for the purpose of evoking the same sensations through art's expressive attempts I come to results if not diametrically opposite to the tendencies of the named masterpieces, so at least to quite different observations than those of our predecessors and teachers.

If I had to represent a broad, a large picture of living reality, I would not hope to heighten its sense of *extant objectivity* by accentuating the fixed statics of *ανακη*; of natural laws, of settled moral regularity.

To attain a true resemblance between the imitative efforts of art and the truly tasted and experienced order of life it would me not suffice to put my representation in a vivid instantaneous motion. I would pretend (metaphorically) to have seen nature and universe themselves not as a picture made or fastened on an immovable wall, but as a sort of painted canvas roof or curtain in the air, incessantly pulled and blown and flapped by a something of an immaterial unknown and unknowable wind.

Whether it was the scarce and sparse knowledge of the different physical waves as external impellents to our subjective sensual date; or as an aftertaste of the legend of world creation; whether it was a kind of feeling derived from the notion of life's being placed in the narrow space between birth and death, but always my sense of the whole, of the reality as such was that of a reached sending, of a sudden unawaited coming, of a welcomed arrival and I always sought to reproduce this trait of being sent and launched, that I thought to find in the nature of the appearance.

That is the only thing I could not oppose, but add to any allegorically directed detailed criticism: that behind and above all stressed and pointed trifles (even on their sharpened magic) and besides the importance of described human lots and historical events there is an effort in the novel to represent the whole sequence of facts and beings and happenings like some moving entireness, like a developing, passing by, rolling and rushing inspiration, as if reality itself had freedom and choice and was composing itself out of numberless variants and versions.

Hence the not sufficient tracing of characters I was reproached with (more than to delineate them I tried to efface them); hence the frank arbitrariness of the "coincidences" (through this means I wanted to show the liberty of being, its verisimilitude touching, adjoining improbability).

It is too bold and silly to send you this incorrect pell mell unread, unrevised. Only the hurry, wherewith I do it does it justify.

Yours, etc.

III

Sept. 9, 1959

BEST thanks for your lively, exciting letter.

It would be a straw splitting to correct the report you were misguided with of my coming to the front and reciting poems to the soldiers. I don't like declaration. Even in a peaceful society, between comfortable, tranquil folks, I consider such performances as pretentious, contrary on common patience and attention. How much more should I think a blasphemy to have paraded before

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such an earnest people risking hourly their lives with any kind of literary trifles. Your information is combined out of different parts, each true when taken separately and false when joint together. I went to the front, and I was persuaded or induced to appear publicly during the next postwar years in the concert halls of the rear; and by those recitals I have been surprised to be prompted on every line I forgot or pronounced with a pause or delay. That are mere nonsense. Why am I wasting time on such nothings? Here is why I am touching upon it. Journalism, newspapers, chronicles of events are meant and calculated to be statements of facts, records, evidences, certainties. Is it not curious that this region of supposed realism and practical views, publicity, is the most unreal domain of the melodramatic romanticism, not to speak of its sad tasks that, for observers of this kind, life is a cardboard-opera situation?

Please do me the friendly favour. After having read the short notice on Chopin, estimate quite soberly: (1) is it clear enough (in its original and translated essence) as to make its pith to be understood (the particular nature of the now formal, now wanted by the contemporary taste, new, original, rich of detailed content and meaning, lived, experienced through and through, personally endured, documentary art). (2) will it not look odd in print, its (of the article) simplicity and shortness or leading to misunderstandings as if arguing against anyone or anything?

To one of my nearest friends in Germany ... I wrote a month ago much about music, form, content, realism, romanticism. She replied (we are great friends) she could not retain the essence of the letter only for herself and would try to have published some excerpts in the Hamburger paper *Die Welt*. I doubt, I don't believe in the possibility of such extracts out of the tousy, styleless, negligent letter. But if she has got it done and published, perhaps the passages can serve you as additions or as footnotes to the Chopin matter if it is needed? (The correspondence goes in German.)

This letter is only a cover or a wrapping to my thanks to you.

Yours sincerely,

B. Pasternak

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Arthur Koestler

Yoga Unexpurgated

The Lotus and the Robot (I)

THE WORD Yoga means Union. The aim of all Yoga practices, as defined in the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, is the ultimate absorption of the subject in his "real self," in pure consciousness without object. When this is attained, individual consciousness merges into cosmic consciousness, and the real self dissolves in the universal self—"as sparks issued from the same fire are destined to return to it," or "as the dewdrop, trembling on a lotus, slips into the shining sea." Then the Yogi's detached alone-ness becomes transformed into the experience of all-oneness; both expressions are derived from the same root, and the Sanskrit word *atman* covers both.

The Rise of Hatha Yoga

PATANJALI'S *Yoga Sutras*, which probably date from the second or third century B.C., are a profoundly seductive, if somewhat obscure, treatise on a mystic philosophy of much earlier origin. Yoga began apparently in the form of Raja Yoga—as a journey towards the primal verities, the Royal Union with the Absolute, by way of meditation. But it was gradually superseded by Hatha Yoga—literally "forced Union" —a discipline with its main emphasis on physiological techniques. Hatha Yoga is at least a thousand years old, and seems to have remained basically unchanged throughout that period. It is the only form of Yoga still practised on a large scale, taught by individual *gurus* or approved Yoga institutes, and propagated in the Western world. But of the doctrine on which it is based only bowdlerised versions are made available to Western sympathisers. These give the impression that Hatha Yoga is merely a superior system of gymnastic exercises, designed to relax the body and mind by adopting a suitable posture, a natural way of breathing, and thus to facilitate a meditative attitude. At the same time, it is usually denied that there is anything "mysterious" or "occult" about its doctrines.

In fact, every Indian-born practitioner of Hatha Yoga, from the Himalayan hermit to the Bombay insurance clerk who spends an hour a day at a Yoga institute, knows that Hatha Yoga does promise the attainment of supernatural powers; and he also knows that every posture and exercise has both a symbolic meaning and a physiological purpose related to the tenets of ayurvedic medicine, and not considered a fit subject for discussion with foreigners.

The following summary of Hatha Yoga doctrines and practices is based partly on the primary sources, and partly on information obtained from various Indian Yoga Institutes, Research Centres, and individual practitioners. The primary sources are: the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, apparently the first standard work on the subject, probably written in the 12th century, but based on a much older tradition; the *Siva Samhita* and the *Gheranda Samhita*, which are compendia of a somewhat later date. All three have been translated into English, but are rather difficult to obtain.[1]

THE EIGHT STEPS OR LIMBS OF YOGA according to Patanjali are: (1) and (2) abstentions and observances (such as non-violence, chastity, avoidance of human company, dietary rules); (3) postures; (4) controlled breathing; (5) and (6) sense-withdrawal and concentration; (7) meditation; (8) *samadhi*—the complete absorption of the mind in the *atma*.

This is the first of two articles by Mr. Koestler based on his recent trip to India and Japan; a brief introductory note on his forthcoming book, THE LOTUS AND THE ROBOT, *will be found among "Authors" in this number.*

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The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* opens with the statement that its purpose is to serve "as a staircase" for those aspirants who, confused by the multiplicity of methods recommended by various sects, are unable to master Raja Yoga. The steps of the staircases are bodily exercises. In the original system of Patanjali, these were contained under headings (3) and (4): posture and breathing, and were discussed only briefly, in general terms. About the first he merely says that it is preferable to adopt a posture "in which one can continue for long and with ease;" about breathing he is equally laconic.

In the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, however, no less than eighty-four postures are mentioned, most of them consisting of twists and contortions, and the control of breathing is carried to the gruesome length to be presently described. Some of the postures, such as the various headstands and spine twists, serve gymnastic purposes, but the more elaborate ones have a different function.

Before he is allowed to practise the advanced techniques, the adept must learn to master the various cleansing practices. Foremost among these are purification of the alimentary tract. The stomach is cleaned by three principal methods: (a) by thrusting a stalk of cane slowly down the gullet and drawing it out; (b) by swallowing as much tepid water as the stomach will hold and vomiting it up; (c) by swallowing a cloth about four inches wide and twenty-two-and-a-half-feet long, and then pulling it out. The last method is considered the most effective, and is still vigorously practised, for instance, at the approved Yoga Health Centre at Santa Cruz, Bombay. It takes about a month or two to learn to swallow the seven and a half yards of surgical gauze in about ten minutes, and it is supposed "to cleanse the waste matter coating the walls of the stomach."

I must now enter upon the painful subject of the Hindu obsession with the bowel functions, which permeated religious observances and social custom. I quote from the *Gheranda Samhita*:

14. Dhouti is of four kinds, and they clear away the impurities of the body. . . .

VATASARA-DHOUTI

16. Contract the mouth like the beak of a crow and drink air slowly, and fill the stomach slowly with it, and move it therein, and then slowly force it out through the lower passage.

17. The Vatasar is a very secret process, it causes the purification of the body, it destroys all diseases and increases the gastric fire.

VARISARA-DHOUTI

18. Fill the mouth with water down to the throat, and then drink it slowly; and then move it through the stomach forcing it downwards expelling it through the rectum.

19. This process should be kept very secret. It purifies the body. And by practising it with care one gets a luminous or shining body.

20. The Varisara is the highest Dhouti. He who practises it with ease purifies his filthy body and turns it into a shining one.

AGNISARA OR FIRE PURIFICATION

21. Press in the navel knot or intestines towards the spine for one hundred times. This is Agnisar or fire process. . . .

BAHISKRITA-DHOUTI

24. . . . . standing in navel-deep water, draw out the Saktinadi (long intestines), wash the Nadi with hand, and so long as its filth is not all washed away, wash it with care, and then draw it in again into the abdomen. . . .

The reverse procedures are known under the term *basti* or "Yoga enemas." *Jala-basti* consists in squatting in a tub of water navel-high and sucking the water up through the rectum. At a more advanced stage, the adept also learns to suck liquids up through his penis (*vajroli mudra*). These achievements presuppose, of course, considerable training, particularly the exercises known as *uddiyama* and *nauli* (the isolation and independent control of the straight and transverse abdominal muscles) and *asvini mudra* (control of the anal sphincter and of certain visceral muscles). By these methods it becomes possible to reverse peristalsis, and to create suctional effects in the digestive and urinary tracts.

The remarkable thing is that these techniques are still recommended and practised in precisely the same form in which the *Gheranda Samhita* and *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* taught them a millenium ago. Thus in *Yoga Hygiene Simplified* (Bombay, 1957), a booklet published by the above-mentioned Yoga Institute in Santa Cruz, it is asserted that practice of the methods just described leads to results "which could not be accomplished by any modern device known to science."

[1] Sinh, Pancham (tr.), *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. 2nd ed. Allahabad, pub. by Lalit Mohan Basu, The Panini Office, 1932. Vidyarnava, Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra (tr.), *Siva Samhita*. 2nd ed. Allahabad, pub. by Sudhindra Nath Basu, The Panini Office, 1923. Vasu, Sris Chandra (tr.), *Gheranda Sanhita*, The Tatva-Vivechaka Press, Bombay, 1895.

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The Vital Breath

PRANAYAMA occupies a central position in the doctrine of Yoga. *Prana* means "life breath," in the physical sense of air, and in the wider sense of vital spirit, comparable to the Greek *pneuma* and the Hebrew *ruakh*.

Patanjali has only this to say about *pranayama*: "50. The regulation of breath is exhaling, inhaling, and storing within; is governed by place, time, and number;[2] and is long and subtle. 51. A fourth form of the control of breath is its storing up with attention on an external or internal object. 52. By breath-control, the afflictions that shroud the luminous quality are annihilated; 53. and the mind becomes fit for steady contemplation. . . ."

Thus originally the control of breathing, like that of bodily posture, was meant to facilitate a peaceful, meditative state of mind. By the time the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* came to be written, it had become not only an all-cure for every form of disease, but also a means for acquiring supernatural powers.

The opening passage of the chapter on breathing in the *Pradipika* is significant: "When the breath moves, the mind also moves. When breath ceases to move, the mind becomes motionless. The body of the Yogi becomes stiff as a stump. Therefore one should control the breath."

"Control" means, chiefly, holding the breath locked in the body as long as possible to induce the trance state of *samadhi*. The first step in the training is the cleansing of the *nadis*—the channels or pathways through which the vital forces of the body are supposed to move. This is achieved by various techniques, such as *bhastrika* (bellow-breathing), or inhaling through the right nostril and exhaling through the left nostril at a fixed rhythm. The classic timing is 1:4:2 for the duration of inhalation, retention, and exhalation respectively; for instance: 2 seconds, 8 seconds, 4 seconds. After a few months of these preliminary exercises, the *nadis* have been purified, and the proper breathing practices can begin.

Their main purpose, as already said, is to suspend the flow of breath by locking in the air. This is achieved by various *mudras* and *bandhas* (locks, seals, restraints), which serve to seal all bodily orifices. Some examples of these are:

Jalandhara mudra, or chin lock. It consists in contracting the throat and pressing the chin firmly into the jugular notch, while simultaneously contracting the abdominal muscles and drawing in the anus. The eyes and mind are focused on the space between the eyebrows. "This causes the mind to swoon and give comfort. For by this joining the mind with the *atman*, the bliss of Yoga is certainly obtained."

Maha mudra and *maha bandha* ("the great binding") consist in a combination of the chin-lock, the drawing in of the abdominal viscerae towards the spine, and the drawing of air into the small intestines by contractions of the anal sphincter. The air is kept locked in by pressure of the heel of the left foot against the anus and perineum. I ought to remark here that in most of the advanced postures the left foot is used for the same definite purpose, that is, for sealing the anal orifice, with simultaneous pressure on the genitals.

Maha-vedha ("the great piercing") is a variation of the previous, but the Yogi "resting both hands equally on the ground, should raise himself a little and strike his buttocks against the ground gently," then exhale the locked-in air through the rectum.

One of the most important practices is *khecari mudra*, because it is supposed to confer the gift of levitation. It is described at great length by the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*; a shorter version is given in the *Gheranda Samhita*:

> Cut the lower tendon of the tongue, and move the tongue constantly; rub it with fresh butter, and draw it out (to lengthen it) with an iron instrument. By practising this always, the tongue becomes long, and when it reaches the space between the eyebrows, then Khecari is accomplished. Then (the tongue being lengthened) practise turning it upwards and backwards so as to touch the palate, till at length it reaches the holes of the nostrils opening into the mouth. Close those holes with the tongue (thus stopping inspiration), and fix the gaze on the space between the eyebrows. This is called Khecari. By this practice there is neither fainting, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor laziness. There comes neither disease, nor decay, nor death. The body becomes divine.

This technique is often called the King of the *Mudras*. It is still actively practised. The best documented report of a European initiated into the higher techniques of Yoga is *Hatha Yoga, a Report of a Personal Experience* by Dr. Theos

[2] "Place" in this context means the minimum distance from the subject's lips at which a feather will remain undisturbed by his quiet exhalation; "time," the duration of holding the breath locked in, and "number," the rhythm.

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Bernard.[3] His account of learning *khecari mudra* is as follows:

> The process itself is simple enough. I started by "milking" the tongue. This was accomplished by washing it and then catching hold of it with a linen towel.... I pulled it straight out and then from side to side as far as it would go. This I did regularly twice a day for ten minutes. After a couple of weeks I noticed that the fraenum was beginning to give way because of being drawn over the incisor teeth; but I wanted to encourage the process, so I resorted to a razor blade. Each morning I delicately drew the blade across the fraenum until blood appeared. There was no pain, and the bleeding stopped before I finished milking the tongue. The following morning the wound had begun to heal and a light tissue was beginning to form, which I scraped off; then I repeated the process of the preceding day.
>
> I was also taught a practice supplementary to milking the tongue. In order to get the tongue down the throat, it is first necessary to loosen the soft palate. The most convenient way is to bend the end of the handle of an ordinary teaspoon enough to form a hook. Insert this in the back of the throat and draw it forward until it catches on to the palate ridge. When a firm grip has been secured, repeatedly pull the palate towards the front part of the mouth. In time this membrane will become so flexible that it will be almost possible to touch the teeth with the soft palate. I practised this daily for ten minutes after milking the tongue.
>
> Success depends upon the amount of time spent in practice. I was able to accomplish it in about four months by working an average of ten minutes a day.... To elongate the tongue so that it can be placed between the eyebrows requires several years,[4] but it is not necessary to achieve this goal at once. It is sufficient to acquire the ability to swallow the tongue and to use it to direct the breath into the desired nostril or shut it off completely....
>
> In the beginning I was permitted to help the tongue down the throat with the fingers, but after a time it was not necessary. As soon as I placed the tongue behind the palate, the saliva began to flow in a constant stream. In this way I was supposed to determine the condition of the body fluids. At first it was thick, heavy, and slimy; eventually, it became thin, clear, and smooth....

Dr. Bernard further reports that blocking both cranial holes of the nose seemed to inhibit the breathing reflex. He had progressed to a stage of proficiency where he could hold his breath for four minutes, but that was his limit. At this stage he learned *khecari mudra*, which enabled him to hold it for five minutes in ten consecutive breathing cycles; while "for a single aspiration I could hold my breath several minutes longer." However, to acquire supernatural powers, the texts prescribe a suspension of at least an hour-and-a-half.

The Vital Fluid

Apart from breath control, *khecari*, the king of the *mudras*, serves another, more important purpose related to one of the traditional ideas of Yoga and Hindu medicine. It is the belief that a man's vital energy is concentrated in his seminal fluid, and that this is stored in a cavity in the skull. It is the most precious substance in the body—variously called *bindu*, *soma-rasa*, nectar, vital fluid, etc.—an elixir of life both in the physical and mystical sense, distilled from the blood; it is supposed to take forty drops of blood and forty days to make one drop of semen. A large store of *bindu* of pure quality guarantees health, longevity, and supernatural powers; it is also held responsible for that radiant glow of the body, ascribed to Yogis and all Brahmacharis—men living in continence. Conversely, every loss of it is a physical and spiritual impoverishment. Losses occur not only in sexual intercourse, but also through suspicious discharges of the ears, nose, and other body openings; they all consist of spoiled *bindu*.

By blocking his windpipe, gullet, and nostrils through *khecari mudra*, the adept is supposed to prevent the loss of vital fluid through its dripping down into the lower centres, and to absorb it back through his tongue. *Jalandhara mudra*, the chin lock, incidentally also serves that purpose, but less effectively. Hence the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*:

> If the hole behind the soft palate be stopped with khecari by turning the tongue upwards, then *bindu* cannot leave its place even if a woman were embraced. If the Yogi drinks *somarasa* by sitting with the tongue turned backwards and mind concentrated, there is no doubt he conquers death within fifteen days.... As fire is inseparably connected with the wood and light is connected with the wick and oil, so does the soul not

[3] London, 1950. Dr. Bernard studied under various *gurus* in India and Tibet (he was killed in Tibet in 1947). The thirty-six plates in his book showing him performing the various *asanas* are probably the best photographic documentation on Yoga.

[4] Sris Chandra Vasu, the translator of *Gheranda Samhita*, writing in 1894, remarks, "It takes about three years to cut away the whole tendon. I saw my Guru doing it in this wise. On every Monday he used to cut the tendon one-twelfth of an inch deep and sprinkle salt over it so that the cut portions may not join together. Then rubbing the tongue with butter he used to pull it out. Peculiar iron instruments are employed for this purpose."

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leave the body full of nectar exuding from the Soma [cavity in the skull].... He who drinks the clear stream of liquor falling from the brain ....by applying the tongue to the hole of the pendant in the palate... becomes free from disease and tender in body, like the stalk of a lotus, and that Yogi lives a very long life. On top of the *Meru* [spinal column], concealed in a hole, is the *somarasa*..., the essence which, leaving the body, causes death in men. It should, therefore, be stopped from shedding. This [khecari mudra] is a very good instrument for this purpose....

An even more drastic instrument, serving the same purpose, is *vajroli mudra*, which I have briefly mentioned before.

Even one who lives a wayward life, without observing any rules of Yoga, but performs *vajroli*, deserves success and is a Yogi. Two things are necessary for this, and these are difficult to get for the ordinary people (1) milk[5] and (2) a woman behaving as desired. By practising to draw in the *bindu* discharges during cohabitation, whether one be a man or a woman, one obtains success in the practice of *vajroli*. By means of a pipe, one should blow [i.e., draw] air slowly into the passage in the male organ. By practice, the discharged *bindu* is drawn up. One can draw back and preserve one's own discharged *bindu*. The Yogi who can protect his *bindu* thus, overcomes death; because death comes by discharging *bindu*, and life is prolonged by its preservation. By preserving *bindu*, the body of the Yogi emits a pleasing smell. There is no fear of death, so long as the *bindu* is well established in the body. The *bindu* of men is under the control of the mind, and life is dependent on the *bindu*. Hence, mind and *bindu* should be protected by all means.

The pipe mentioned in the quotation is used in the first stage of the training, until the adept has learned to aspire fluids through the urethra, as he has previously learnt to do through the colon. To Hindus brought up in the traditions of ayurvedic medicine—which applies to the vast majority of the nation—the procedure may seem complicated, but perfectly logical. Thus in *Hatha Yoga Simplified*, published by the Yoga Institute, Santa Cruz, the author explains that sexual intercourse in itself is not harmful, only the loss of vital fluid which it entails. Therefore *vajroli mudra* is to be highly recommended. After explaining the various stages of training—the aspiration through the urethra first of water, "then of liquids of higher specific gravity, *e.g.*, milk, honey, and sometimes even mercury" (the latter, however, only under expert supervision), he concludes:

The highest technique of *vajroli*... consists in successfully withholding the ejaculation of sex secretions prior to or during... orgasm under sexual excitement and thus cause their resorption through the lymphatics. In case the secretions happen to be ejected, the Yogi is advised to withdraw the secretion from the vagina where it may have become deposited, with aid of Madhavadasa vacuum [part of the *vajroli* technique].... The scientific theory may be simplified thus: that instead of mere passivity, it is preferable and hygienic to engage in normal sexual activities when necessary—for this certainly causes less strain and lesser energy waste than what has to be actually expended in self-denials and repressions—remembering that there should be no physiological loss. This loss, to be sure, is inevitable if the secretions escape from the body. The Yogi, therefore... suffers no corresponding loss. On the contrary, he gains much through healthful reactions and resorption of the extra fresh fluids otherwise not available.... It is thus... an excellent hygienic ideal and—*if only* the process of *vajroli* could be made available to and brought within the practice of one and all—solves incidentally the most discussed topic in modern eugenics, namely, family planning through birth-control....

The author is the head of an Institute which enjoys Government support.

Even level-headed Englishmen, if they have lived long enough in India, seem to succumb to these ideas. Thus Mr. Ernest Wood, the author of the latest popular book on the subject,[6] who had a long and distinguished career as an educationalist at the Universities of Bombay and Madras:

[It should be] remembered that the semen draws its material from all over, and transmits something from every part of the body to the succeeding generation, and that waste of this fluid, or excessive generation of it, depletes the body all over, and on the other hand conservation of it is highly beneficial to the whole body. It appears that this is the one function of the body which does not work for the benefit of the body, but draws from it for the sake of another or others, and therefore its non-use does not harm the body but on the contrary is beneficial to it. This is at the back of the universal belief of the Yogis in favour of continence and celibacy.

We shall see that this preoccupation with continence in the strictly physiological, seminal meaning is not restricted to Yogis, but to be found in every region and in every social stratum in India.

The Serpent Power

THE ultimate aim of Hatha Yoga is to awaken the vital force in man slumbering at the base of his spine in the shape of a coiled serpent—*Kundalini*. When *Kundalini* is awak-

[5] Milk is believed by Hindus to be an aphrodisiac.
[6] *Yoga*. Penguin Books (1959).

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ened, she must be forced to ascend through a narrow canal in the spinal cord, through various gates and stations, to the top of the brain, and there consummate her symbolic union with Shiva, her spouse. She then returns to her former abode. When this union becomes permanent, the Yogi is liberated and enters into his final *samadhi*.

The process of awakening and moving the *Kundalini* serpent has a physiological and a symbolic aspect—the former grotesquely unappetising, the latter beautiful and profound. Both are derived from the archetypal erotic imagery which permeates Hindu religious art and ayurvedic medicine.

The serpent *Kundalini* "lies coiled three-and-a-half times" around the base of the spine, closing the *sushumna* with its mouth. The *sushumna* is a narrow canal in the centre of the spinal cord, through which the serpent must be forced to go upward.

The awakening of the serpent is done by one or the other combination of the various air-locks and bowel gymnastics which have been described. Essential to most is *asvini mudra*, the rhythmic contraction and dilation of the anal sphincter. One recommended variant is *joni mudra*, the closing up of all orifices—ears with the thumbs, eyes with the index fingers, nostrils with middle fingers, lips with the remaining fingers, the rectum and member by the heel of the foot. This is combined with mental concentration and repeating certain *mantras*—invocations. The effect is that the serpent begins to suffocate, awakens with a hiss and "becomes straight like a snake struck with a stick." In order to make her enter the narrow channel in the cord, violent bellow breathing is recommended for a few minutes. After that various abdominal muscle contractions are applied for periods of an hour-and-a-half at a time, accompanied by *mantras*, to force her gradually upwards through the channel.

The serpent must force her way through three "gates" and past six *chakras*, or centres. These six centres are of great importance in the Hindu concept of the human body. The first is at the base of the spine, the second at the genitals, the third near the navel, the fourth near the heart, the fifth near the throat, the sixth between the eyebrows; a seventh, at the very top of the brain, forms a category apart.

Each of the *chakras* (literally, wheels) has a *padma* or lotus-flower attached to it, with varying numbers of petals. Whereas the greatest numbers of petals in the lower centres is sixteen, the top of the brain displays a thousand-petalled lotus.

Each time *Kundalini* passes through one of the centres, its lotus, whose petals had previously been pointing downward, now turns and faces upward. The flower is said to have become "cool;" its attention has been diverted from the nether impulses of the body towards the seat of the God where the union with the life-snake is going to take place. *Kundalini*'s painful journey, assisted by visceral acrobacies and respiratory intoxication, is one of the most ancient symbols for the sublimation of the libido.

Apart from its lotus, each of the centres has a symbolic animal, a colour, a male divinity with his *shakti* and an invocatory *mantra* associated with it. Thus the *chakra* at the base of the spine is associated with Brahma and the Goddess Dakini, with the colour yellow, and the four-petalled lotus; its animal symbol is the elephant and its invocatory mantra the syllable *lam*. The highest of the six centres, between the eyebrows, is called the *ajna chakra*. *Ajna* means "command." Here Shiva resides; his symbol is the *lingam*, or phallus, which the Shaivites display painted on their foreheads. His seat in the command centre is always represented by a triangle enclosing the *lingam*, the crescent moon and a dot. This dot has a multiplicity of symbolic meanings. The Sanskrit word for it is *bindu*, signifying dot or drop; but also semen; and also the dot on the "m" in the *mantra om* —the highest invocation of God—which makes the sound of the "m" trail and reverberate like a slack cord.

All the symbols are here crowded together: the *lingam* and the seed, the God, the point representing the infinite void. *Kundalini*'s journey comes to an end at the seventh *chakra* somewhere under the crown of the skull—the seat of the thousand-petalled lotus. It is here that her union with Shiva is consummated; after that she returns, "no longer a maiden but a young widow," to her home at the base of the spine. On her return journey, the lotus-flowers in the various centres are again made to face downward, and the residing divinities cohabit with their female *shaktis*, thus lending new vitality to each centre.

However, when the Yogi reaches ultimate *samadhi*, the snake will remain permanently united with Shiva in the form of an *ardhanarishwara*—a god half-male and half-female—a motive often encountered in Hindu sculpture.

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The location of the cavity in which the *bindu* is stored is somewhat dubious; sometimes it is said to be located on the left, or lunar, side of the brow-*chakra*, sometimes above it, sometimes just above the top of the spine.

SAMADHI, the ultimate end of the hard and devious road of Yoga, will be discussed presently. But I must briefly mention a phenomenon which is said to occur in the last stages before *samadhi*: the appearance of an "inner light," and of various "inner sounds" or *nadas*. Regarding the latter, the *Siva Samhita* says: "The first sound is like the hum of the honey-intoxicated bee, next that of a flute, then of a harp; after this, by the gradual practice of Yoga, the destroyer of the darkness of the world, he hears the sounds of ringing bells; then sounds like roars of thunder. When one fixes his full attention on this sound, being free from fear he gets *samadhi*." On the other hand, the *Pradipika* gives a different order of *nadas* progressing through four stages: first light sounds "like the tinkling of ornaments"; next "the beating of a kettle drum"; thirdly, the sound of a different drum; lastly, "the perfect sound like that of a flute."

More interesting are the lights, because their descriptions have a certain resemblance to the "white light" reported by Christian mystics—a dazzling, almost blinding radiance which blots out everything else. Bernard records:

> In the second month the lights made their appearance. In the beginning it was not unlike looking into a kaleidoscope; but this condition soon passed, and single colours, brilliant and radiant, remained. Then came the "white light" that is referred to so frequently. This was an interesting phenomenon. At times it became almost blinding; however, it never lasted long. . . . I was eventually able to see this white light with my eyes wide open in the daylight. The mind seemed to be wiped out completely and nothing existed but this brilliant light.

However, in view of the air-locking and eye-rolling techniques of Yoga, the lights and sounds may have a simple physiological explanation. Thus at the age of nine I had a curious experience: the dazzling white light appeared the moment before going under anæsthesia induced by ether, for a minor operation, and simultaneously with the appearance of the light the sensation of choking and fear stopped. Similarly, in the gruesome reports of delinquents who survived a miscarried execution by hanging either because the rope broke or because they were cut down while still alive, colour hallucinations are mentioned, though the dominant colour is green.

I do not mean, of course, that accounts of mystical experiences should always be explained away by this kind of argument. But I do believe that such experiences must be sought along a road other than that of Hatha Yoga. *Kundalini*'s journey past the lotus-flowers from the base of the spine to the head, her transformation from a biological into a spiritual force, is a beautiful parable; but there is a tendency in the human mind never to leave a symbol alone, an itch to debase it by pseudo-rationalisations and thus the Indian mystic is taught to force his tongue into the cranial cavity, to drink his *bindu* and to blink with his anus, to achieve union with Brahma.

Yoga Research

ALL teachers of Hatha Yoga, from ancient masters to modern practitioners, have advanced three main claims; firstly, that it cures disorders of mind and body, and produces heightened physical and mental well-being; secondly, that it procures supernatural powers, *siddhis*, through control of the body's latent forces; thirdly, that it leads to the mystic union. Thus there are, broadly speaking, three aspects to Yoga: the medical, the miraculous, and the mystical. Although a certain amount of overlapping is unavoidable, I shall discuss each aspect separately.

THERE EXIST, AS FAR AS I WAS ABLE to discover, three centres in contemporary India where more or less serious Yoga research is being carried out. They are: the All India Institute of Mental Health in Bangalore, which works under the Union Government; the Kaivalyadhama Ishwardas Chunilal Yogic Health Centre, headed by *Swami* Kuvalayananda, recognised as a Research Institute by the Government and the Bombay State; and the Academy of Yoga under the auspices of the Yoga Institute, Bombay Santa Cruz, headed by Shri Yogendra, and recognised by the Bombay State Government.

The Bangalore Institute has no clinic, and is not concerned with the medical aspect. The other two are not on friendly terms and are inclined to deny the validity of each other's methods.

The Kaivalyadhama maintains a Health Centre in Bombay's West End, the Marine Drive, and a Research Institute at Lonavla, on

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the road to Poonah. They are very competently directed by *Swami* Kuvalayananda, a charming old gentleman who looks like a Brahmin edition of Albert Einstein, with a bushy white moustache, a domed forehead, wispy hair and white corkscrew sidelocks hanging down to his shoulders like tresses. He reminded me of Einstein because he had the same peculiar look in his large brown eyes: speculative, puzzled, and naïve at the same time. His manner was modest and unassuming, yet impressive in its gentle authority—a particular mixture shared by so many Indians, from Gandhi downward. When I complimented him on his erudition in modern physics and bio-chemistry, he said with evident sincerity: "I know a little about everything and nothing." The Health Centre, housed in a villa in the Indo-Victorian style, with the usual rusty iron-lattice verandahs, is dingy by European, but fairly well appointed by Indian standards. It employed four instructors, three male, one female, and had at the time about 150 male and 20 female pupils or patients—the term is employed almost synonymously. They would come in for an hour or more a day, during a course lasting, on the average, three months.

I watched a group of four or five middle-aged men doing exercises in simple *asanas*; it looked like a slightly eccentric version of the kind of thing taught in a Western gymnasium to get some pep into tired office-workers. It was a small and modest institute which did its best according to its modest means, under an evidently honest *Swami*. It did not go in for the "advanced" practices described previously. As for clinical diseases, the *Swami* explained that these were all treated individually, according to the principles of Yogic medicine. The statistical results were printed in the Health Centre's medical report for the years 1954–55, which he gave me. Later reports were either not published or not available. (He then invited me to visit the other branch of the establishment, the Research Institute in the hills at Lonavla—about which in the next section.)

On my way back, the friendly Indian gentleman who had accompanied me to the Centre, and who was a devotee of the *Swami*'s, told me his personal story. He had suffered from chronic asthma, and the *Swami* had cured him —mainly by exercises of standing on the head in various postures, with appropriate breathing practices. What type of asthma he had suffered from, and how complete the cure had been, I was unable to ascertain, but no doubt there had been an amelioration. Then my informant had gone on a visit to Italy "where I foolishly acquired the habit of drinking wine," and this caused a relapse. On his return he was told—either by the *Swami* or by a physician, the point was not clear—that his liver, damaged by having drunk wine in Italy, would no longer stand the strain of the Yogic exercises. Shortly afterwards, he developed status asthmaticus and had to spend several days under oxygen in a hospital. "Now it is too late," he said resignedly; Yoga could no longer help him. We had two wineless meals together in dry Bombay, and I am fairly sure that he had never been a heavy drinker.

The report[7] which I took home said on the cover that the Centre "teaches Yogic exercises for the promotion of Health and the Cure of chronic diseases, without distinction of caste or creed, under Yogic and medical supervision." The list of disorders treated was impressive:

> Constipation, dyspepsia, piles, nerve-exhaustion, seminal weakness, impotency (other than congenital), general debility, chronic functional headaches, insomnia, heart disease (functional), chronic cold, chronic bronchitis, asthma (certain types), lumbago, sciatica and other rheumatic pains, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, diseases of women including sterility (particular types), leucorrhœa, disturbances of menstruation, flexions and displacements of the uterus, repeated abortion, ovarian insufficiency, etc., etc.

The cures listed were equally impressive: 84·65 per cent of the male patients treated were reported to be "relieved or improving," and the corresponding proportion of female patients was 89·2 per cent. Considering that about 12½ per cent of the patients had been suffering from chronic asthma, about 13 per cent from "neurasthenia," and nearly 10 per cent from psycho-neurosis, the results claimed were more impressive than any Western clinic could boast of. At closer inspection of the tables, however, I saw that out of the total of 1,024 patients of both sexes, 470, that is, nearly 50 per cent, had been written of under the heading "results unknown due to short attendance"; and the percentage of those "relieved or improving" had been computed on the basis of the remaining 50 per cent. The meaning of the term "relieved or improving" was not further defined, nor was

[7] The Kaivalyadhama Ishwardas Chunilal Yogic Health Centre—Medical Report for the Year 1954–55, published by Kaivalyadhama, Bombay 2.

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there a mention of follow-up. I had an uneasy feeling that by the time my unhappy asthmatic friend got under the oxygen tent, his case would have been included among those "relieved or improving."

I do not doubt the *Swami*'s entire sincerity or belief in his own method, and merely wish to say that statistics of this kind do not carry much conviction. Since the Kaivalyadhama Health Centre is, to my knowledge, the only Institute of Yogic medicine in India with a claim to be taken seriously, one must conclude that the claims for the medical achievements of Yoga are not based on empirical evidence.

THE rival establishment is in the Bombay suburb Santa Cruz. It is a small, modern building in a moderately well-kept garden, but inside it is much dingier than the Marine Drive place. The prospectus announces proudly that the "Academy of Yoga" has a "Practice Hall" and a "Lecture Hall;" but in small print it explains further down that the Practice Hall accommodates "a batch of eight persons" and the Lecture Hall "has accommodation for sixteen persons." They are, in fact, each about the size of a bed-sitter around Bayswater Road, and about as cheerful. The modest clinic, however, was clean.

The Founder-President of the Academy, Shri Yogendra, studied under the same *guru* as his rival, but in every other respect he is his exact opposite. *Swami* Kuvalayananda is gentle, meek, and white-haired; Shri Yogendra is over six feet tall, black-haired, beak-nosed and fierce-looking like a Pathan tribesman. In a word, Yogendra to Kuvalayananda is as Esau to Jacob.

The Biography of Shri Yogendra has been written by his wife (who is the Secretary of the Academy) and is worth briefly recording.[8] He was born in 1897 in Surat, Bombay State, as Manibhai Haribhai Desai, the son of a poor schoolteacher. At the age of eighteen, he was sent to St. Xavier's College at Bombay. A year later, a famous *guru*[9] visited Bombay. Young Manibhai and his room-mate Ambalal went to see him:

> In the big hall of the first floor, nearly 200 devotees had gathered to receive blessings from His Holiness. Manibhai, for no apparent cause, was thrilled when he stepped on the staircase. Ambalal was following him. Immediately Manibhai's head became visible to the audience, the holy man caught sight of him, and before the former could climb up the stairs, the latter rushed in to greet him with the words, "So you have come. I have been anxiously awaiting you for years. Seeing you, I get strength. Come!" It may be mentioned here that neither of them had ever met each other before. The devotees were taken by surprise, seeing the venerable teacher pull Manibhai up and embrace him.... His Holiness asked a very simple question in a low but firm tone, "Now what?" Manibhai instinctively understood what was meant, and he replied with all the emphasis at his command, "I will go with you." They looked understandingly at each other; there was supreme silence and both seemed lost in a reverie.

So Manibhai, after obtaining his father's consent, followed the *guru* to his hermitage and received the name of Mastamani, the Yogi-intoxicated. He remained two years and became the holy man's favourite pupil:

> When Paramahamsaji took Mani and another devoted student to Matheran hills for training in *basti* and *vajroli* [drawing up liquids through anus and penis], the unadorned beauty of Nature inspired the young author to poetic musings.

The next year, he wrote several volumes of poetry, and translated Tagore's *Gitanjali* into the Gujurati language. He then "experienced an inner awakening of a very complex but superior order which lasted a week and from which he emerged with the conviction that he must go to America to spread the message of Yoga." The *guru* gladly agreed, as we gather from a letter which he subsequently wrote to his disciple in New York: 'I am proud of your work in America. You are doing the same thing for me that *Swami* Vivekananda had done for his *guru*, Paramhamsa Ramakrishna.... I knew that you would follow his example in memorialising his *guru*."

Swami Vivekananda, the favourite disciple of the founder of the Ramakrishna Order, had been the first *swami* who, at the turn of the century, popularised Yoga on lecture tours in the United States.

Before he set out for America, however, Mani found a wealthy patron, Mr. Dadena, in whose villa near Bombay he established his first "Yoga Institute." Here the twenty-two-year-old *guru* undertook to cure such varied afflictions as "heart troubles, obesity, asthma, general debility, prostate enlargement, gout, hemicrania, and other diseases."

[8] International Journal on the Science of Yoga (April–September, 1936), published by the Yoga Institute, Bombay.

[9] Paramahamsa Madhavadasagi of Malsar.

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In 1919, Mani and Mr. Dadena landed in America and established themselves at 125 Riverside Drive, New York:

> The early cases were for reduction of weight. ... Things moved smoothly so long as the money lasted, but about the middle of January, 1920, there was a day when Mr. Dadena, who was looking after the financial end, had only five cents with him.... Mr. Dadena felt quite upset about the future. The founder was unmoved when the gravity of the situation was explained to him. And what should happen but an urgent telephone call to rouse Mr. Dadena from his thoughts.

The call was from an engineer employed in the South African diamond mines, whose wife was laid up with a headache. The *swami* and Mr. Dadena rushed to the rescue, and the result is described in the simple words: "A blank cheque was passed." The next year another Yoga Institute was opened near Tuxedo Park in the Bear Mountains. The list of diseases treated now embraced every known ailment, and we are informed that "the results were all that could be desired." After two years, however, the Institute closed down, and Mani returned to India, where he changed his name to Shri Yogendra. The next few years were spent in fruitless attempts to raise money for starting a new Institute. When they all failed, Shri Yogendra "invented a novel chemical product known as Yoco book polish—a preservative for books against dry rot, moulds, moths, white ants, and other destructive agents... Its international reputation may be gauged from the fact that the Oxford University Press of London accepted the international sole agency for Yoco book polish on guaranteed basis."

In 1927, he married Miss Sita Devi, who bore him two sons. Various Journals, Institutes, and Academies, with branches "in Latvia and Arabia" were founded, and prospectuses were sent out promising to students diplomas of "B.Y." (Bachelor of Yoga) in three months, or a "Y.D." in four years. "Thanks, however, to the prejudice of the Provincial Government inspirited by the efforts of a contemporary, this pioneer scheme did not materialise." The contemporary referred to was *Swami* Kuvalayananda. In 1958, after a lifelong struggle, Shri Yogendra's present Institute was recognised and endowed with a small subsidy by the Bombay Government.

This, briefly, is the story of the second of the two Indian Yoga Centres. Since it was recognised, the Institute has received, according to Shri Yogendra, fifty applications from candidates for the training course; of these twenty-six were accepted, but only seven have received their Teacher's Certificate after a nine-months' course. Whether the others failed to pass, or gave up, I was unable to ascertain from the Founder. The number of medical patients, he claimed, was twelve—which is surprisingly small, and perhaps rather reassuring.

One interesting fact emerged from talking with the Founder, and with a highly-strung young man working as his assistant: that they had abandoned the orthodox Hatha Yoga postures as impracticable. The classical *asanas*, Yogendra explained, were "too hard and painful," and he had modified them according to his own ideas. This was a significant admission in view of the assurances of Yogic literature that the *asanas* are not meant to be a strain on the body. Equally interesting was Shri Yogendra's opinion, expressed with great force, that the various headstand postures "do more harm than good." The headstand *asanas* are basic to Hatha Yoga, and are much practised in *Swami* Kuvalayananda's rival Institute—which partly explains perhaps why Yogendra opposed them. He has also modified the classic breathing rhythms, such as the 1:4:2 cycle, and replaced them by the "Yogendra rhythm." The *prana*, he holds, is not air, but "biophysical energy generated by the rhythm"—and so forth.

Such disagreements about the therapeutic value of various postures and exercises need not be treated too seriously; after all, there exist conflicting schools in Western medicine too. But Western medicine, with all its inadequacies, prejudices, and frustrations, has been constantly evolving since the days of Avicenna, who lived during the same period as the author of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. Its achievements are based on the broadening empirical and theoretical insights of half-a-dozen interacting sciences; and it has developed methods of controlled experiment on a statistically relevant scale. On the other hand, Yoga therapy and ayurvedic medicine have remained unchanged for over a thousand years. Faith can move mountains and perhaps even kidney stones; but it would be sacrilegious to advise ordinary people to rely on it. Gandhi refused to have penicillin administered to his wife dying from bronchial infection because of the Hindu taboo on injections; Vinoba Bhave very nearly died for similar reasons, and the peaceful massacre by omission is continuing in India.

If it were difficult to prove that the simpler

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Yoga exercises are dangerous to health, it would be even more difficult to prove that they are beneficial in preference to Western methods of physical training. The breathing techniques, aimed at over-ventilation and auto-intoxication, are problematical to say the least of it; and the belief that training under an "experienced teacher" guarantees against risks is another act of faith. As for the postures designed for meditation, different races have traditionally different ways of relaxing the body, from squatting on one's heels to sitting crosslegged; from reclining on one elbow to sitting with one's feet up on a table. The lotus posture, and its variants, seem to fit the Indian body-build and temperament; there is no reason to assume that they would make meditative repose easier for a Western monk than gently pacing in his cloistered garden.

Supernatural Claims

WHILE in India, I talked to more than forty people who, at one time or another, had practised Hatha Yoga. They included elderly men, highly-placed in the administrative hierarchy, young journalists and office workers, Yoga researchers and their professional subjects, religious believers and agnostics, Gandhians, Marxists, and one ex-Communist—but, to my regret, no woman. Leaving professionals aside, their records of sustained practice ranged from three weeks to twelve years; and the time spent on practising from half-an-hour to several hours a day. The only common element shared by these people of diverse age, profession, and social background was the belief that, pursued with sufficient willpower and persistence, Yoga conferred *siddhis*, supernatural powers, on the practitioner. Only a few averred having actually exercised such powers at some stage; but all without exception believed that slackness and incontinence alone were preventing them from attaining to that stage. This belief was also shared—though only reluctantly admitted—by the research workers concerned with the scientific investigation of Yoga phenomenon.

In Patanjali's classic treatise, which consists of four chapters, most of the third is devoted to these occult powers; they range from remembering past incarnations to prophecy, clairvoyance, levitation, entering into other bodies, the transmutation of elements, and omniscience. In the later Yoga literature, eight basic *siddhis* are mentioned: (1) *anima*—to shrink to the size of an atom; (2) *mahima*—to expand in space; (3) *laghima*—lightness, levitation; (4) *prapti*—the power to reach anywhere, "even to the moon;" (5) *prakamya*—omnipotence of will; (6) *ishatwa*—the power to create; (7) *vashitwa*—control over the self, and its immunity to outside influences; (8) *kamavasayita*—the suppression of all desires and bodily needs. The Siva Samhita adds to this list the power to become invisible, and to transport the body to any place at will.

In books on Yoga written by, or for Westerners, it is usually asserted that miracles are not the aim of Yogic training, but merely a by-product, and that every good *guru* would discourage his pupil from pursuing them. This would be in line with the attitude of Christian mystics who regarded such phenomena as acute embarrassments which are to be avoided. Thus St. Teresa of Avila says in her Life that the experience of being suddenly lifted into the air was "a very sore distress to me;" she prayed to the Lord "that He would be pleased to give me no more of those graces;" and when a nun surprised her suspended in the air and "trembling all over," Theresa ordered her "under obeisance to say nothing of what I had seen."[10]

To prove that Hindu mysticism has the same attitude, a famous passage in *Patanjali* is usually quoted. In Professor Raghavan's translation, that passage is paraphrased as follows: "Aphorism 37 says that these occult powers as such are really impediments to the attainment and completion of the state of perfection." In Ernest Wood's translation the passage reads: "These powers of the spreading (or outgoing) mind are injurious to contemplation (*samadhi*)." In an earlier translation[11] the warning is given in a conditional form: "The [occult] powers hereinbefore described are liable to become obstacles in the way of perfect concentration, because of the possibility of wonder and pleasure flowing from their exercise, but are not obstacles for the ascetic who is perfect in the practice enjoined." I am unable to decide which of the three versions is closer to the original—particularly as Wood refers to the aphorism as No. 36, Raghavan as No. 37, and Judge and Connelly as No. 38. But one fact stands out: that this aphorism is the *only* warning in the entire text;

[10] Herbert Thurston, S.J., *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (Burns Oates, London, 1952), pp. 10, 12.

[11] *The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, An Interpretation by William Q. Judge, assisted by James Henderson Connelly (The Theosophical Publishing Co. of New York, 1912), p. 52.

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and it only refers to certain psychic powers mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, whereas the powers which are listed after the warning, such as entering into another's body, omnipotence, and levitation, are held out as legitimate rewards to those who master the higher forms of contemplation. As for the later sources, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and its companion texts, the eight *siddhis* are promised on practically every page in remuneration for the more difficult *mudras*. All disclaimers notwithstanding, the *siddhis* are an integral part of Yoga.

Conversations with Yoga practitioners, whether professionals or amateurs, followed more or less the same pattern. At the beginning, my informant would indignantly deny that he was after the *siddhis*—such silly ideas were only spread by charlatans and mendicant fakirs. The sole purpose of Yoga was to acquire a healthy body and peace of mind for meditation. But once I had explained that I believed the evidence in favour of telepathy to be quite convincing and had an open mind about related Indian phenomena, the atmosphere would change and reserve would fade.

THERE WAS, FOR INSTANCE, B., a young physicist of twenty-six, engaged in post-graduate research. He was a typical young Indian intellectual, earnest, sober, and a little pedantic. I was surprised to discover that he had practised Yoga for three years fairly intensely, and given it up "for lack of willpower." He had not himself experienced any *siddhis*, though once or twice he thought he was just on the threshold; but he had seen at the age of nine, in his native village near Mysore, an itinerant Yogi levitate three to four feet above ground level, then slowly float down. At the age of twenty, he also saw another Yogi floating naked on a well of six feet by eight "either in a crouching position or standing on his head." I was rather impressed by his matter-of-fact manner of relating these events, until he produced a small tin statuette of Durga and explained in the same matter-of-fact voice that a certain miracle-working woman had made it materialise out of the air in the palm of his hand. I had read about the woman, who was a professional performer and did not even pretend to be more. I mentioned to the young scientist that his Durga could be bought for a rupee at any bazaar. He knew that, of course, and all he said was "That has nothing to do with it; you have missed the point."

ANOTHER ENCOUNTER IS PERHAPS BEST TOLD in condensed form by quoting from my diary:

"Called for the remarkable V.N. at the College (where he lectures on philosophy), took him for lunch at the Taj. Tall, gaunt, dark, in dark European clothes, with dark-glowing eyes, and with rich, black fur growing upward from his earlobes, like a faun's; he actually uses a pocket-comb on them (the ears). At first reticent and 'scientific;' then, on the long car journey to the hotel and during lunch he unbent. Aged 33, unmarried ('it's easier that way'), has been practising for eleven or twelve years; changes diet, experimentally, every three months ('even Gandhi did that though he was only a Karma Yogi'). Has achieved various *siddhis*: e.g., he locked himself into a hermetically sealed room and by sheer will-power raised the temperature of the room by two to three degrees centigrade twice during one session ('but afterwards I was so exhausted, had to stay in bed for 2–3 weeks'). Repeatedly, when in deep trance, a snake appeared and moved through the room ('it was *not* a hallucination'). Once he stopped a monkey eating nuts next door by a mental command. One day, standing in front of his *guru*'s house, he saw three stark naked tribesmen appear from nowhere at the door, talk to the *guru*, and vanish again unexpectedly ('they had come to invite my *guru* to their "club" '). In Europe I would have thought him a schizo, but here it's all in a day's work...."

This kind of story is indeed typical, and not merely of Yoga practitioners. India has never severed its ties with the magic world. The editorial columns of the great Indian dailies bear the imprint of the 20th century, but the back of the page, except for the linotype, could have been printed in the 16th. There, in the marriage advertisements, parents specify their sons' and daughters' religion, caste, colour, height, education, and "powerful" or "excellent" *mahamsa*. One or the other specification might be missing, but never the *mahamsa*, the horoscope. It is a decisive factor in the choice not only of the candidate, but also of the auspicious day and hour for consummating the marriage. In half-a-million villages, where 80 per cent of the population lives, every important activity and decision is still regulated by consulting the stars.

The reason is, simply, that although India is going through an Industrial Revolution of sorts, it has never gone through a Scientific Revolution of the kind which changed the structure of European thought in the 17th century,

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supplanting magical causation by physical causation. Before that turning-point, Europe was almost as deeply immersed in astrology and other forms of magic thought as India still is. But in Europe, that transformation of thought preceded the transformation of society; in India it is the other way round. Underneath the power dams and steelworks of the second five-year plan lies the ancient soil; one only has to scratch it and the black magic comes oozing out with its slightly rancid smell.

Levitation

I HAD to digress for a moment to explain how difficult it is, under these circumstances, to obtain any reliable evidence for or against the occurrence of the para-normal phenomena described in Yogic literature. Even otherwise shrewd European witnesses who have lived steeped in this atmosphere for some length of time cannot be relied on. Thus Ernest Wood writes in his Penguin book on Yoga: "Levitation, or the rising of the body from the ground and its suspension a few feet up in the air above the seat or couch, is a universally accepted fact in India. I remember one occasion when an old Yogi was levitated in a recumbent posture about six feet above the ground in an open field, for about half an hour, while the visitors were permitted to pass sticks to and fro in the space between."

One would expect a serious scholar to quote immediately the exact date and location of such an extraordinary event, accompanied by the testimonial of all the witnesses he could lay hands on. But all we get here by way of evidence are the words, "I remember one occasion"—and this, alas, is typical of most writers on the subject. Equally characteristic is the fact that the only other piece of evidence which Wood adduces for the occurrence of levitation is a quotation from Fosco Maraini's charming book *Secret Tibet*, where the author tells us that the Maharajah of Sikkim's daughter told him that when she was a little girl her uncle "did what you would call exercises in levitation. I used to take him a little rice. He would be motionless in mid-air. Every day he rose a little higher.... There are certain things you don't forget."

I am not arguing for or against the possibility of levitation, only about the quality of the evidence. Ernest Wood is right when he says that levitation is "universally accepted as a fact" in India. Moreover, it is considered as one of the easier *siddhis*, generally attained by way of *khecari mudra*. Alain Danielou, for instance, another European convert who is held in high esteem as a student of mysticism in India, writes: "This is considered to be fairly easy to do and is used for the frequently performed act of levitation...." But again no chapter, no verse.

One may argue that a popular belief which has survived for centuries must contain some truth, but this is not always the case; witches riding on broomsticks may be archetypal symbols, they are not racial memories. Two facts, I believe, ought to be taken into consideration. Firstly, most alleged eye-witness reports, whether first, second, or third-hand, seem to conform to a certain pattern. The witness always dates his or her experience "when I was a small child," usually between the age of five and nine. Apart from my young physicist, I met two Indians (one a psychiatrist, the other a farmer) who also stated that they had seen levitation—both as children and both in a crowd on a village square. I know of no first-hand report (except Professor Wood's undated statement) in which the witness was an adult. In view of the impressionable nature of that age, even more pronounced in Indian children, the possibility of confusion between listening to a vividly visualised story and believing later to have actually experienced it, would be one possible explanation for its remarkable persistence.

Secondly, it seems to me odd that among the experimental work which has been done at various Yoga research institutes, no experiments on levitation were published or mentioned to me. Some of the experiments (to be presently described) require costly and complicated instruments. It would be a simple procedure to let the subject perform the appropriate *mudras* on his mat placed on the platform of a weighing machine, and see whether his body gets any lighter. He would not have to levitate actually—the loss of a few pounds would be decisive proof of the power of mind over gravity. At one research institute, where I made this obvious suggestion, I had the impression that it had been tried with negative results. But that is neither here nor there, and if the hoary subject of levitation is to be tackled seriously, some procedure on these lines would have to be patiently tried on any likely subject; whatever the number of failures, a single positive result under suitable controls would mean a revolution in our outlook on the world.

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The Pit Experiments

In view of the handicaps I mentioned, it is encouraging to know that serious experimental work is nevertheless being carried out. Foremost in this field are the All India Institute of Mental Health in Bangalore, and *Swami* Kuvalayananda's Research Centre at Lonavla.

If I was sceptical about the medical work carried out at the *Swami*'s Health Centre on the Marine Drive in Bombay, this attitude does not apply to his research work. Lonavla lies on a high plateau in the Sahia mountains near Poonah, in a peaceful, rather Grecian landscape, blessed by a constant sea breeze. The Institute owns some fifty acres of land, which stretch over two hills, and include the *Swami*'s private *ashram*. Its laboratory equipment is excellent, including a lie-detector, breath-analyser, X-ray department, electro-encephalograph, and so on. There is a spacious library, and a literary department where five scholars are engaged in preparing a ten-volume Yoga Encyclopaedia.

I was introduced to the present experimental subject—a middle-aged man of medium height and athletic build, with gentle manners and those curiously fierce eyes which I have come to associate with practising Yogis. He had been an itinerant showman at country fairs, until the *Swami*, in his search for likely subjects, discovered him and made him into his guinea-pig. He now regards the *Swami* with the white corkscrew tresses as his *guru*. While we walked through the various laboratories, he trotted behind the *Swami* like a faithful dog, listening to every word with utmost devotion. "Whatever strength I have," he explained to me, "comes from *Swamiji*." The inspection completed, the *Swami* told him to give a demonstration. The Yogi disappeared delightedly, and came back a minute later, wearing a gaudy dressing-gown of the kind in which circus artistes enter the ring, and a chain of medals round his neck. Discarding the robe, he was seen to be wearing trunks of tiger-skin, and a collection of wrist-bangles; he looked superb, his black eyes now all aglow. He began with the classic exercises, such as *uddiyama*—drawing in the abdominal muscles, while forcing the viscerae and diaphragm upward, until a large, hollow cavity appears under the ribs, a kind of incredible grotto in the flesh, and the *obliqui abdomini*, the two transversal muscles, stick out in a rather horrifying manner as on anatomical figures stripped of skin. Then came *nauli*, the isolation and separate manipulation of the abdominal straight muscles, making them bulge out in a whorl at the navel, and subsequently rolling them to the right and to the left as if a rolling-pin were moving under the skin—while the remaining areas of the abdomen seem to be emptied of content, and the navel is sucked in to within a few inches of the spine. It was fascinating and faintly nauseating to watch, and so were the various headstands, with arms and limbs threaded through each other and tangled like a complicated mariner's knot. The Yogi then demonstrated the extraordinary power of his chest muscles—the result of *pranayama*—by winding a sturdy steel wire round his torso (cushioned by a leather belt), tightening the wire with a tourniquet, and then snapping it with a single inhalation. Next, he wound a three-eighth inch gauge iron-chain round his chest, put his naked foot inside the chain and slowly broke it. (I have kept both the wire and the chain; they are structurally faultless.) It was as good a strong-man act as one can see in a first-rate variety show, but the last one was something more special: the Yogi took a fresh palm-leaf, folded it twice, and, using his index and middle finger like a pair of scissors, cut the leaf neatly into two. His fingers felt hard and bony, but there was no callosity on them. His explanation was "that he concentrated all his life-forces between the two fingers."

These were remarkable achievements of muscle control, including the involuntary muscles. I must mention in this context a report given to me by an eminent Bombay psychiatrist who had watched, and photographed, a Yogi showman attaching with a string a twenty-pound weight to the tip of his penis, and lifting it by producing an erection in front of the audience. The photographs show the usual tall and emaciated individual, smeared with ashes, with matted hair and a wild stare; the doctor told me that the man had been under the influence of drugs, and had admitted to him that drugs had been an essential part of the training by his *guru*. *Bhang*, the hashish-like substance distilled from *cannabis indica*, plays an important part in Hatha Yoga. Dr. Bernard, for instance, was given *bhang* by his *guru* before his final initiation.

All this, however, has nothing to do with the *siddhis*. Of these only one has been thoroughly investigated at Lonavla: the classic Yogic experiment of being buried alive in a pit. They showed me their experimental pit: it was approximately six feet by three feet by three feet, its bottom

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about six feet down under ground level. It was closed by a tight-fitting concrete lid, and this was then covered by three feet of earth. I shall not go into the details of the experiment because, as the *Swami* frankly told me, it had proved abortive. Though the pit seemed sufficiently air-tight to make any human being die of suffocation after a few minutes, and would certainly have convinced any village audience that it was so, it transpired that everybody had vastly underestimated the porosity of the surrounding earth. They discovered this when, after a series of experiments, they tried to pump the air out of the pit, yet the pressure inside only fell by 0·5. During the experiment itself, they had only measured the relative oxygen and carbon-oxide content inside the pit; the leakage of fresh oxygen into the pit became apparent when they had the idea of pumping it out entirely.

The thoroughness of the experiment, and the frank admission of its failure, were entirely to the *Swami*'s credit. Though he himself evidently believed in *siddhis*, he was equally candid in admitting that all his experiments in this direction had given negative results. It seems that the only significant finding they had produced so far was that the EEG curves of subjects in trance remained normal, whereas the psycho-galvanic reflex remained consistently below normal.[12]

The pit experiment was also carried out at the Institute of Mental Health at Bangalore by a team of five research workers, including one European. I had an opportunity to talk to three of them, to inspect the pit and later on to read a paper which they had jointly published.[13]

The dimensions of this pit were four feet by three feet by two-and-a-half feet, which makes a volume of approximately one cubic yard. Its bottom was covered with a rubber sheet, and its lid was a one-inch wooden plank covered with six inches of earth. The subject was buried in the pit on three different occasions, for two hours, for nine hours, and for eight-and-a-half hours respectively. The instruments in the pit conveyed information on electrical activity in the brain and heart, on the temperature, humidity, and chemical composition of the air in the pit, and made mechanical recordings of breathing motions of the chest (with spirometers). The subject, a Yogi by name of Shri Krishna Iyengar, was dressed in a loin cloth only. He lay down on the floor of the pit with the various instruments and electrodes attached to him, lit an incense stick, and went into *samadhi*. Then he was buried for the periods indicated, varying between two and nine hours. The interval between the first and second experiment was one month, between the second and third, a fortnight. The results of the experiment were as follows:

The electrical records of brain activity remained the same inside the pit as those taken under normal conditions outside. They indicate that the subject was both alert and relaxed, but not asleep. The conclusion is that he was either not in *samadhi*, or that *samadhi* does not affect the electricity activity of the brain.

The most interesting results concern breathing. Unfortunately, as the report says, in this case, too, "the possibility of leakage of gases through the porous walls of the pit, dug in raw earth, has not been investigated. This is a serious source of error." But even so, one significant fact emerged. The heart-beat remained steady throughout, and showed a regular pattern with slow variations between 40 and 100 beats per minute, which is within normal limits. Breathing, however, slowed down from the normal rate of about 16 per minute, to a slow rate of about 1 breath per minute, and sometimes even to a rate of 1 respiration in two minutes. This was apparently compensated for by doubling the amount of ventilation (of the volume of air passed through the lungs) from 0·5 litre to 1 litre.[14] Even so, the basic metabolic rate had been considerably lowered. Thus the results indicate a kind of slow-pedalling of the organism, shown by the lowering of the rate of oxygen exchange. This is a remarkable but by no means a supernatural achievement, and does not bear out the claim that Yogis buried in the pit survive without breathing at all.

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[12] The electro-encephalogram records the intensity and rhythm of electrical activities in the brain. The psycho-galvanic reflex (used in lie-detectors) reflects changes in the electrical properties of the body surface in response to emotional stimuli. These changes, like sweating, goose-flesh, or "bristling" are controlled by the sympathetic nervous system, and thus indicate emotive reactions.

[13] *Some Experiments on a "Yogi" in Controlled States* by H. V. Gundu Rao, N. Krishnaswamy, R. L. Narasimhaiya, J. Hoenig, and M. V. Govindaswamy, in *Journal of the All India Institute of Mental Health* (Bangalore, July, 1958).

[14] The amount of ventilation could not be directly measured; it was computed from measurements of the carbon-dioxide content in the pit at the beginning and end of the period of burial. At the beginning it had been 0·04 per cent; at the end of the two-hour period 1·34 per cent; at the end of the nine-hour period 3·8 per cent.

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Stopping the Heart

RELATED to this is another claim, that Yogis can stop their heart-beats at will. This claim was thoroughly investigated at the Andhra Medical College at Visakhapatnam. The subject was a Yogi called Ramananda—a very advanced practitioner; he had not only mastered *khecari mudra* by severance of the tendon of the tongue, but had his tongue surgically split lengthwise in two, because previously he could only cover the opening of one nostril at a time.

The experiment was carried out in 1957, when Ramananda was thirty-four, and had practised Hatha Yoga for sixteen years. He demonstrated with ease all the advance routines, including the aspiration of fluids through colon and urethra, and the ejection of liquids from the stomach through mouth or nose at will. He had spent various periods buried in a pit, and claimed that the longest period had been twenty-eight days; but, the report[15] says, "this has not been investigated."

The point of the experiment was the voluntary suspension of heart-beat and pulse. The results showed that Ramananda was capable of reducing both to a considerable extent for a period of 20–30 seconds. During this time the pulse could not be felt at all by the usual method of placing a finger on the artery; but the sphygmograph (a mechanical apparatus for measuring blood pressure) continued to record feeble pulse waves of an irregular and attenuated nature. The weakening of the pulse was produced by two independent methods; firstly, by contraction of the biceps, pectoralis, and other muscles, thus mechanically compressing the brachial artery; secondly, by diminishing the flow through holding of the breath. Both can be learnt by any normal person; comparison of the sphygmographic records of Ramananda with those of an ordinary subject during suspended breathing, show only a slight difference, explained by training.

Examination of the heart's activity during the period of suspension yielded more impressive results. By the normal method of auscultation, the heart-beats could not be heard; on the tape record they were "sometimes faint and sometimes inaudible." The EEG record showed completely normal electrical activity of the heart throughout the experiment; on the other hand, the fluoroscope showed, according to the radiologist's report, the following:

> After he inhaled slightly and stopped breathing, the cardiac pulsation was found to be arrested except for a slight flicker along the left border below the pulmonary conus and in the apical segment of the left ventricle. There was no pulsation in any other segment. This status was maintained for about 30 seconds. After he commenced respiration, normal cardiac pulsation was observed.

Thus Ramananda had demonstrated beyond doubt his ability to diminish the activity of his heart through voluntary effort, using a certain breathing technique. However, most normal people can affect the function of their hearts, though to a less dramatic extent, by holding their breath and "willing" the heart to beat more quietly. In clinical jargon this is called "Valsalva manœuvring."[16] The degree of voluntary control of the heart varies, of course, according to the individual; but at least one case of an even more dramatic nature than Ramananda's achievement has been reliably reported in America. The report, by Dr. Charles M. McClure, was published in *California Medicine*, the official Journal of the California Medical Association.[17]

It describes the case of a forty-four-year-old aircraft mechanic of Danish descent, Vernon W. Hansen, who had acquired the ability to slow down his heart-beat and to stop it completely at will—including its electrical activity—for five seconds. Hansen, at the age of seven, had suffered from rheumatic fever, and had overheard the family doctor saying that he would not live to be twenty. The illness left him with a slight heart condition, and with the constant fear that his heart might stop beating while he was asleep. To prevent this, he learnt to exercise voluntary control over its functions:

> By sitting quietly, relaxing completely, and "allowing everything to stop," he could induce progressive slowing of the pulse until cessation of heart action would occur, then a feeling of impending loss of consciousness. After a few seconds of this sensation, he would take a deep breath and normal heart action would resume.

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[15] *A Preliminary Scientific Investigation into some of the Unusual Physiological Manifestations Acquired as a Result of Yogic Practices in India* by G. V. Satyanarayanamurthi, M.D., and P. Brahmayya Sastry, M.B.B.S., M.Sc., Ph.D., in *Wiener Zeitschrift für Nervenheilkunde und die Grenzgebiete* (15, 1958), pp. 239–49.

[16] The sinuses of Valsalva are bulges in the aortic walls; these interact with the valves that regulate the flow through the pulmonary and coronary arteries.

[17] Vol. 90, No. 6, June, 1959.

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During the cardiac arrest, "his colour would become the ashen grey of sudden circulatory failure." The electro-cardiagram, reproduced in the report, shows with uncontroversial clarity the process of slowing down, and the complete stoppage of five seconds. The process was "induced through some mechanism which, although under voluntary control, is not known to the patient himself. Careful observation did not reveal any breath-holding or Valsalva manœuvre in connection with the cessation of heart-beat." So he did not even have to resort to *pranayama*. Aircraftsman Hansen has certainly beaten all Yogic records.

Dr. McClure had known him for five years. Hansen could produce the phenomenon at any time, without any effort. How he did it, he did not know himself, as the report says. Apparently the damage caused by the rheumatic fever and his constant worry were instrumental in enabling him to concentrate his attention on that critically sensitivised focus in his body, and to increase the normal degree of control over it to an abnormal extent. His case is a further illustration of the fact that there is no hard and fast boundary between the "voluntary" and "involuntary" functions of the body; and that the degree of control exercised over the latter is a question of training in focusing attention.

CONCERNING other *siddhis*, I have seen neither the rope-trick nor the mango-tree wonder, and could find no reliable person who has seen either of them. "Fire-walking" as an ordeal, or a magic stunt, is as old as civilisation, and not confined to India. It depends, of course, on the type of combustible used, the duration of contact, and other technical points which have not been experimentally investigated by any of the Yoga research institutes.

A final remark about walking or floating on water, which does belong to the traditional category of Yoga *siddhis*. I have mentioned that my young physicist, who asserted that as a child he had seen a Yogi levitate, had also seen, at the age of twenty, another Yogi floating on a well "either in a crouching position or standing on his head." In contrast to the levitation memory, which was hazy, the well memory was quite precise—except on the crucial question of the exact posture in which the Yogi was floating. Like most Indians, the young man could not swim, and to float on water in any posture seemed to him a miraculous achievement in itself. Now, to float "upside down," while turning a somersault in the water, or by keeping the trunk immersed as long as one's breath will hold, is a trivial matter for anybody who can swim; and the acrobatically pliant body, plus the breath-holding technique of a trained Yogi, could doubtless carry it to spectacular lengths. As for the "crouching posture," the young man was positive that the Yogi kept his legs folded, but whether his body was upright, or lying flat on the water he could not say; after reflection, he thought the latter more likely "because his eyes were fixed on the sky." To float on one's back, whether with legs outstretched or folded, is again a miracle to non-swimmers only, whose aquatic experience, like that of the majority of pious Hindus, is confined to a ritual sprinkle and dip, eyes closed and fingers clamped over the nostrils, in a temple tank or river.

My suspicion that the floating Yogis were practising a simple leg-pull on a naïve audience was amusingly confirmed when, a little while later, I read an account of it in the *International Journal of the Science of Yoga*, published by the Santa Cruz Institute. The author of the article relates how Shri Yogendra had searched for several months for a famous *guru*, hidden in the Kashmir mountains, until he finally tracked him down. That *guru* "was gifted with the power of floating on water through mastery over *plavini pranayana*, and demonstrated the same before Shri Yogendra left him." On the next page there is a photograph of a man, comfortably floating on his back in shallow water, with arms folded behind his head. The photograph bears the caption: "Mastery over the *plavini* process of Yoga breathing enables the student to float on water as illustrated in this photo. The posture assumed is the traditional Fish-pose."

I then looked up *plavini pranayana*. It consists in "suspending the breath outside the lungs"—that is, swallowing quantities of air—"while focusing the mind on the space between the eyebrows until it swoons." Dr. Bernard expressly warns: "the beginner is advised not to work on this practice." As a reward for this effort, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* holds out this promise: "when the belly is filled with air freely circulating within the body, the body easily floats, even in the deepest water, like the leaf of a lotus." It could be had in a simpler way.

To sum up: the demonstrable phenomena produced by Hatha Yoga are neither more nor less miraculous than the blisters and stigmata, the anæsthesias, catatonias, and hallucinations

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produced under hypnosis or in hysterical states. Hatha Yoga is a specific method of inducing such phenomena, mainly relying on techniques of self-hypnosis through respiratory, circulatory, and other visceral manœuvres, repetitive invocations, and hashish-type drugs. Its impressiveness to the Western observer rests on the systematisation of the techniques for producing such phenomena, and on the mystic value set on them. The former enables it to demonstrate the power of mind over the autonomous functions of the body more forcibly than any Western school, but at the price of far-fetched, devious, and debasing techniques. This leaves the question of mystic value, as the last and most important aspect of Yoga to be discussed.

The Mystic Aspect

THE ultimate aim of Yoga is *samadhi*, the mystic union. "As salt being dissolved in water becomes one with it, so when *atman* and mind become one, it is called *samadhi*." Yet the word seems to have different meanings in different contexts. The *Gheranda Samhita* gives six kinds of *samadhis*, attained by six different methods. Some translators render it as "meditation" or "contemplation" or "absorption;" others as "trance" or "ecstatic bliss;" still others as "super-consciousness"—or "deep, dreamless sleep."

In spite of this, there is a large area of agreement between the various sources on certain basic features of *Samadhi*. These are, from the *physiological* point of view, a lowering of all basic functions; heart-beat, pulse, breathing, nutrition—a kind of hibernation of the body. *Mentally*, *samadhi* is said to consist of "pure" consciousness, that is, consciousness without object or content other than consciousness itself. Thus turned upon itself, pure consciousness penetrates into the Real Self, the *atman*, which is behind and beyond the sentient ego. The ego is a transient phenomenon, the *atman* is unalterable, transcending the phenomenal world, part and parcel of Brahman, the Universal Spirit, which it contains and in which it is contained. Lastly, from the *emotional* point of view, *samadhi* is a state of bliss, its onset signalled by a shapeless radiance which blots out everything else.

Samadhi may last a few minutes, hours, or days. But there is also "final *samadhi*" into which a holy man enters at will; it entails death of the body and of the body-bound ego, whereas the Real Self, liberated from the wheel of rebirth, remains permanently united with the universal spirit. Except in final *samadhi*, the mind returns each time into the sentient ego, without retaining any positive memory of the union which it has experienced.

The Real Self has thus nothing to do with the Unconscious in the Freudian sense or with Jung's Collective Unconscious. For the unconscious, as we understand it, manifests itself above all in the dream, whereas in Hindu philosophy, dreaming is a function of the ego, not of the Real Self. Only in "deep sleep," which is by definition dreamless, can the Real Self be approached.

Is *samadhi*, then, to be identified with "deep sleep"? And if so, how can it also be called a "super-conscious" or "contemplative" state? Is it not, rather, a state of comatose "sub-" or "un-"consciousness? The answer is that Indian philosophy either does not regard these terms as contradictory, or is indifferent to the contradiction between them. Brahma is the fullness and the void, everything and nothing, aloneness and all-oneness at the same time, at no time. A state of mind, which is withdrawn from all objects of consciousness, voided of any content, contemplating nothing, would be called in Western psychology a state of un- or non-consciousness. The Eastern philosopher would have no quarrel with this description, but he would remark that "pure consciousness" is there nevertheless. The dialogue would then continue more or less on the following lines:

Q: When you speak of "pure consciousness," you mean consciousness *of what*?

A: Of consciousness itself, and of nothing else.

Q: But *who* is conscious of being conscious: the person who entered *samadhi*?

A: No, in *samadhi* the self no longer exists. It is his ego-less Real Self being conscious of the Real Self.

Q: Then if the person's ordinary self has ceased to exist, that person can no longer be conscious, and you must agree that he has entered a state of un- or non-consciousness.

A: That is correct. He has entered the state of super-consciousness which we also call *"samadhi"* or "contemplation" or "being one with reality."

And so the merry-go-round would continue.

The equation of *samadhi* with "deep sleep" begins with the Upanishads and can be followed all the way down to the writings of modern mystics like Krishna Menon—although some contemporary Hindu academics tried to explain it away. Since the point is of some importance in dispelling Western misconceptions about

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Indian philosophy and Indian mysticism, I shall quote a few characteristic passages from the major Upanishads.

PRASNA UPANISHAD

Question IV: Then Sauryayanin Gargya asked him: "Worthy Sire! In a man, who are they [the faculties] that sleep, who that are awake, which is that perceiving power that sees the dream. To whom does the happiness which they enjoy belong? In whom is everything established?"

Pippalada replied: "Gargya! Just as the rays of the setting Sun are, all of them, gathered up in that orb of light, and they issue forth again when he rises again, even so is all that gathered up in the mind that perceives everything; hence it is that the individual does not hear, see, smell, taste, touch, speak, take, enjoy, discharge, or move, and they say, he sleeps. The fires of the vital breaths alone are awake in this body.... Here, this perceiving mind enjoys its greatness in dream. [But] when mind is dominated by the inner light, it dreams no dream; there in this body, the happiness of deep sleep ensues. Just as, my dear, birds retire into their nests, even so everything is absorbed into the Supreme Self...."

MANDUKYA UPANISHAD

This basic text begins with a discussion of the incantation *Om* which signifies the Real Self; it continues: "This Self is Brahman; and this Self is of four grades.... The waking state with knowledge of external objects is the first grade.... The dream state perceiving within oneself an enjoyment devoid of gross objects is the second grade. That is deep sleep where the sleeping one does not fancy any desire and sees no dream—a state of deep sleep, unified, one mass of pure knowledge, enjoying only bliss—this is the third degree.... Perceiving neither internally nor externally, neither knowing nor non-knowing; the imperceptible, indescribable, unnameable, of the sole form of the consciousness of the one Self, the negation of the phenomenal world, the Peaceful, the Happy, the One without a second, this they consider is the fourth grade; that is the Self, that is the thing to be realised."

CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD

VI. viii. 1–7. Uddalaka Aruni told his son Svetaketu: "Know from me, my dear son, of the state of sleep. When a man is said to sleep, he becomes united, my dear, with Reality; he attains (*apiti*) to his own real Self (*Svam*); hence they say that he is sleeping (*svamapiti*): he has really been re-united with his own self...."

VIII. i. 4. Now this serenity (in deep sleep) which arises above this physical state, reaches the Light Supreme, attains its own innate form; this is the Self; that is the immortal and fearless; this the Brahman....

VII. xi. Where one sleeps deeply, in full serenity, and dreamless, that is the Self; it is immortal and fearless; it is the Brahman....

BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

14–20.... Ajatasatru took Gargya by the hand; they came to a sleeping man; him Ajatasatru called by name; "Oh mighty one in white dress, Soma, King!"... Ajatasatru asked: "When this man was asleep... where had he gone? From where did he come back now?" Gargya knew this not. Ajatasatru: "When he... was asleep, he gathered the knowledge of the senses through their faculties and slept in the ether that is within the heart; when he draws (into himself) all those faculties, then the person sleeps; then the sense of smell is withdrawn, the mind is withdrawn. When he moves about in dream, all those worlds are his, he becomes a mighty king or an eminent Brahman or rises high and falls low; just as a great king, collecting his forces, moves about in his country as he pleases, even so this person gathers the senses and moves about as he pleases in his body. But when he is in deep sleep, he is not aware of anything; there are seventy-two thousand veins which issue from the heart all over the body; returning through them he stays in the body; just as a boy, a great king, or an eminent Brahman, having attained exceeding happiness, lies down, even so he sleeps.... This is the secret description of it that takes one to it; the Truth of the Truth; the faculties are the truth; of them, he is the Truth."

IV. iii. 2–7.... Falling asleep, he transcends this world and all forms of death, *i.e.*, mundane activities.... 9.... In that state the person is self-illumined.... 21. That state of deep sleep is the form of Self in which there is no desire, no taint of virtue and of vice, no fear; just as one, embraced by his beloved one, is oblivious to anything, outside or inside, even so this person in the embrace of the Self... is unconscious of anything, outside or inside; that is his form in which all desires have been realised, in which the Self alone constitutes the desire, in which there is no desire or sorrow....

LASTLY, a modern mystic, Krishna Menon: "In the deep-sleep state shines that principle to which the word 'I' points. There the mind has dissolved and cannot therefore perceive it. When the mind is directed to it, it changes into that, losing the characteristics of mind. This is called *samadhi*."

If all this sounds like a hymn to Tanatos—that I believe is indeed its deepest meaning. The dreamless, trance-sleep of *samadhi* is a homage to Tanatos: an exercise in death while preparing for the "final *samadhi*" in which it is consumed.

Sleep cannot normally be produced by an act of will, and dreamless sleep even less. The distinguishing mark of *samadhi* is that it can be so produced. And since the first and last aim of Yoga, from its Vedic origins to this day, has always been the mystic union of *samadhi*, we are now in a better position to understand the ultimate meaning behind its apparently perverse techniques. It is a systematic conditioning of

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the body to conniving in its own destruction, at the command of the will, by a series of graduated stages—from the suspension of the vital breath, through the temporary suspension of consciousness, to the ultimate step.

This connivance of the body can only be obtained by gaining mastery over all its functions—and in the first place over the involuntary functions governed by the vegetative nervous system. All bodily reflexes devoted to survival must be wrenched from the service of Eros, and pressed into the service of Tanatos. If the function of an organ can be reversed, this will be done, whatever the effort. Thus the lower openings of the body, designed for elimination, must be trained for intake. The openings designed for intake must be blocked, locked, sealed to the world. If this cannot be done completely, the functions will at least be partially suspended: breath, heart-beat, pulse. The eyeballs are turned inward and upward in a violent squint so that only the blind white substance is directed at the world.

The Yogi's attitude to the various organs of his body may be compared to that of an experienced officer, training his unit for a dangerous, and indeed suicidal mission. To obtain absolute obedience, the unit must be kept in a fit condition; order, efficiency, cleanliness, must be carried to perfection; to keep up morale, it must be treated sternly but with understanding. In other words, the body must be on the peak of its form to become capable of annihilating itself, partially or totally, at the will's command. That is why the serpent life-force, curled round the base of the spine, must be first awakened, then forced upward, towards the Centre of Command between the eyebrows—and from there into the embrace of Shiva, the Destroyer.

The Christian ascetic mortifies his body to hasten its return to dust. He proceeds by a direct way; the Yogi's life is spent on a prodigious detour. He must build up his body into a super-efficient, super-sentient instrument of self-annihilation. That act of annihilation is *samadhi*. Beyond it there is no Heavenly Father, no smiling Virgin or loving Bridegroom waiting. Only the Real Self is waiting, whose attributes are all negative—"without shape, without horizon, without end"; who is indicated by *"neti, neti"*—"not this, not this;" the ultimate Void—compressed into the reverberations of the single syllable *Om*.

NO WONDER that the naked rocks of this terrifying ascent are overgrown with weeds—the miraculous *siddhis*. For does not he who has achieved mastery over death acquire miraculous powers? Having realised that the world of the senses is illusion, should he not be able to prove that space, time, and gravity are also illusions?

As the centuries went by, the weeds multiplied on the once naked rock, and the postures of the climbers assumed more and more grotesque contortions. They reflected the perennial tragedy of the human condition—that the means become an end in themselves.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras date, within a century or two, from the same period as Aristotle's *Logic*. The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and its companion treatises coincide, within the same generous limits, with the works of the Aristotelian Schoolmen. Both were sterile and pedantic derivations from a great and original adventure of the human mind. But while the Schoolmen confined themselves to verbal logic-chopping, the *swamis* did it with their bowels; and while scholasticism is a distant memory, Yoga is not. One is reminded of Erasmus' epigram on the Schoolmen: "They are looking in utter darkness for that which has no existence whatever"—but then, the Indian mystic would accept this as a statement of fact, without any derogatory intent, and a worthy programme to be pursued.

Among Westerners who have tried to enter the spirit of Yoga the hard way, Dr. Bernard was probably the most persistent, modest, and sincere. He wrote his last work on Hatha Yoga after many years of devoted practice, and in the index to that short book there are two moving headings:

Miracles, non transpired.
Supernatural, not revealed.

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William Golding

Miss Pulkinhorn

THIS isn't a ghost story. I wish it were. What I personally believe doesn't come into this story. An organist has to subscribe to what the chapter believes or at least keep his mouth shut. Come to that, the chapter is rocky enough if you ask me, what with this reservation of the Sacrament and all the rest. Isn't that in a rubric or flat against the thirty-nine articles or something?

I suppose Miss Pulkinhorn knew them by heart. What a woman! Understand me, I can think of a dozen women, fifty women connected with the cathedral, and all sincere, devout, and good. But Miss Pulkinhorn was an oddity. A cathedral always collects one like that, crazy with opinions and hate. You can even see a couple like her, hats perched up, feathers a-quiver, nodding and whispering away the reputation of half the city. They always believe in their own privileged goodness, of course—want their pennies and their buns: want to keep pride and vanity and hate and yet remain God's own special chicken. She was one of that sort. She set about removing me because after all I'm a worldly creature even for an organist but she couldn't catch me up to anything. And when I got my knighthood and became Sir Edward, I was canonised, so to speak—part of the dignity of the diocese—and she couldn't touch me. Besides, I altered a little—what with music and glass for a hobby—I found it easy enough to conform. As I got interested in painted glass, year by year time slid away. Time doesn't count in a cathedral even though this story stretches over a whole generation. When I first knew her I thought a church window was a hole to let in light. By the end, I was a knighted organist and something of an authority on painted glass and our own windows in particular; though with one exception they're a shoddy lot. The exception is the Abraham window in the ambulatory and it's part of this story in a very subtle way. But the time factor in a cathedral doesn't affect the concentration, the unity of a story. Time ceases to be a dimension, drawing things apart. Two hundred years are nothing and what happened five hundred years ago is just round the corner. I see his strange involuntary association with Miss Pulkinhorn as a single thing that grew persistently and slowly as a great tree. When it was a seedling I was a cheerful young man with a tendency to—irregularities. When it ended, position and respectability lay on me like the dust on the tombs.

She was desperately poor, you know, and kept up appearances in a huge wreck of a house. Those were easy days for finding servants but all she ever had was a woman to help in the mornings. She was a great one for the cathedral and I don't suppose she ever missed a service, but sat out the lot, simmering with disapproval. Between whiles she came into the cathedral once a day and swept round it in a—possessive manner; though not only the weather but the vestments, the candles, the images, must have been purgatory for her. Between the two wars when they re-dedicated the chapel of St. Augustine and reserved the Sacrament there, I'm told she nearly left the diocese. She carried an ebony cane with a silver top and she was so tiny

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it seemed to reach her shoulder. She wore a black silk dress and a black silk coat that reached her instep. Her neck was enmeshed in black netting stiffened at the nape with wire. The netting spread down in front under the short "V" of her dress-front which was fastened with an enormous topaz brooch. Her hat was a round black thing set exactly on top of her head and gleaming with feathers. She would come through the north-west door, go up the north aisle, her stick clicking as she went, and into the ambulatory. When she passed the chapel of the Sacrament she would lift her chin higher, and come as near as a lady should to a sniff. A light burns there whenever the Sacrament is present, and is put out if it's not. She'd go on round the ambulatory, down the south aisle, across inside the great west door, and out again where she had come in. I labelled that round in my mind as "Miss Pulkinhorn's tour of the estate." I suppose she was going through the list of all the things that ought to be different, mentally removing everything that conflicted with her own peculiar conception of God.

Take a candle now. Is there anything prettier in the world than those little nests of lighted candles you'll see—say in Chartres cathedral? There they are, alive and twinkling in the darkness with those unbelievable windows smouldering above them. I had the luck to hear Miss Pulkinhorn on the subject of candles. She struck her cane on the floor and hissed: "Like a Christmas Tree!" Precisely. Miss Pulkinhorn didn't understand Christmas. Anything more than the bare date was pretty high up on the list of her "superstitions." She had some honorary position which gave her the chance to direct the future behaviour of fallen women, poor things. And she kept what she could of the city, very very clean. One night when I had her too much on my mind I totted up her list of triumphs; three wives, two schoolmasters, and a parson.

And, of course, him.

He was her masterpiece, her magnum opus, the crown of her life's work. I don't think she intended to do what she did. I'm sure she meant everything for the best. She wanted to teach him a lesson; and believe me, when so much bigotry and ignorance gets mixed up with jealousy on however high a plane, it curdles into a poison that can turn a woman into a witch. It can make a criminal trick feel like an act of charity. I'm sure she called it charity. She probably prayed for him with the dead top of her mind while everything underneath was festering.

Was he a saint? No, I'm certain he wasn't. Read about the saints, even the least spectacular among them, and somewhere in their characters you'll come across steel-sheer adamant, something that can't be driven. He was a good man but a weak man; immeasurably better than most of us, and he lived, you'll see, on the very fringe of lunacy. He was a self-deceiver, as successful in his line as Miss Pulkinhorn, but his deceit had a kind of innocence about it. I didn't believe in his illuminated face, of course. That rumour began to float about and maddened Miss Pulkinhorn. I watched him, so I ought to know. You can see from the organ-loft across the chancel right into the chapel of the Sacrament. Glancing in my mirror as I played—my driving mirror, I call it—I could see the choir or the decani at least, and beyond them the Bohun chantry and Bishop Winne holding up two stumps. Beyond that I could see the light flickering by the Sacrament and shining on his bowed bald head. That was my daily life for a generation. Fill in the summer differences for yourself. If he'd started shining or levitating or any of the stock things, I should have spotted him in my mirror.

Then there's the window. He didn't notice things as a normal man does but he might have noticed Abraham unconsciously. Mind, I'm not doubting his belief. Day after day, year after year, you'd see him shambling up the north aisle, his bright, silly face tilted a little, his patched overcoat flapping round him, his broken shoes scraping over the stones. In summer that coat looked like a piece of dusty carpet that daylight discovers crumpled somewhere in a shed. In winter he

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moved in it a shadow among shadows. He was old, thirty years ago when I saw him first and he changed no more than Miss Pulkinhorn. Three times a day he went into the chapel of the Sacrament, knelt at the back, and worshipped what was reserved there. He came for a while in the morning after consecration or perhaps during the service and sometimes followed the Sacrament into the chapel. He'd come back at midday for a longer spell and then exactly at half-past-six in the evening. If the light was out he'd go away. What point was there in his staying? But you could set your watch by his half-past-six visit.

THIS is an indecent story. It trespasses on the privacies of two most unfortunate people. Yet I was woven into it and can't escape my knowledge nor partial responsibility for what happened. What mercy we all need! Now I look back after these years I can feel nothing but remorse and shame for my lack of wit; and pity for them, pity for us all.

But this indecency—he wasn't properly conscious, you know. Sometimes when the fit was on him he'd give things away with a kind of frantic eagerness. And some of his visits to the chapel were more successful than others. He'd be there, bowed and kneeling and occasionally his head would lift and his arms—and he'd look ecstatic. You see that gesture here and there in religious art as a symbol of revelation. There's a figure like that in Chartres and one in Rheims. I've even seen it in a hieroglyphic four thousand years old and always meaning the same thing. But we've got it too, in the Abraham window. Some people object to the secondary colours, orange, purple, and mauve, that you get in fifteenth-century glass, but I enjoy it. There they are, God appearing from a great burst of colour, smiling in a friendly, fatherly way, and Abraham below in the right-hand light, smiling up with face and hands lifted.

Well Miss Pulkinhorn disapproved of his habits publicly. I'm sure that privately she hated him. She came to hang all her feelings on his alleged superstition; and I think she was jealous—jealous of his simplicity and fervour; jealous of his devotion with all the dreadful energy of childless and ignorant women. She'd have called him an exhibitionist if she'd known the word, and perhaps in an innocent way he was. You see he *could* have got that gesture from Abraham. That was why I checked up on the rumour of his shining face. Like all people who don't believe in miracles, I was very ready to accept one. But he remained as he was, time drifted past, and the tree of their relationship grew.

ONE foggy December night I let myself out of my house and walked briskly across the close to the cathedral. Nobody was about except the Precentor who passed me by Saint Swithin's Gate, and I felt chilly and lonely as I let myself in. The office had been said, as is usual on a Monday, and not sung. But Canon Blake was about as ill as he could be and next morning we were to have a special service of intercession for him. He was a great benefactor of the school and the hospital and a good friend to me, but Tuesday is my day in London, so our organ being what it is I was going to set the pistons for my new assistant and leave a note. Now I remember I wanted to try over an old prelude of mine that I'd turned up—yes, of course, otherwise I should never have warmed my hands as I did. I let myself in by the organist's door and walked gratefully into the warmth. We've got eight great stoves in the cathedral and one stands just where the Norman work ends and the 15th-century addition begins. It's by the chapel of the Sacrament and the flue goes straight up through the vaulting. I tucked my music under one arm, pulled off my gloves, and felt the stove gingerly. They're pretty nearly red hot sometimes but this one had been shut down for the night and was only a very little too warm. The light was flickering away in the chapel and someone was moving in there at the back. It was Miss Pulkinhorn. She came out of the shadows and walked quickly towards the light. Then she saw me and stopped. We were almost alone in the cathedral, for it shuts at seven. Only old Rekeby was prowl-

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ing round somewhere, moving chairs, shutting doors, and shining his electric torch into corners. Miss Pulkinhorn turned and walked out of the chapel, passing me without a word, and vanished into the shadows of the east end. She held her stick away from the pavement too. It didn't click. Less than half a minute later the north-west door bumped and *he* came in, though it was long past his usual time. He fairly cantered up the aisle, talking to himself and fumbling with the buttons of his overcoat. He rushed past me into the chapel and slumped on his knees. Then and there with no preliminary cough or shuffle or settling down he went straight into that position, for all the world like Abraham in the window.

I stayed where I was, thinking less of music and more of what extraordinary things we are. And I was vaguely worried. Do you know those days of discomfort when you expect the worst without reason? Standing there, still mechanically caressing the stove, I felt a kind of expanding worry that I was unable to pin down. Usually when I saw him so, even when I took Abraham into account, I maintained a kind of interior respect for something I couldn't understand. What was different now? I walked away across the chancel towards the steps that lead up to the organ loft, but my unformed worry went with me. I felt let down and didn't know why. Something was cheapened. That was it. Something was cheapened and diminished. Then as I reached the top step, I remembered the Precentor pacing through the close, going to visit Canon Blake on his death-bed, pacing along, a bell-shaped figure in his black cloak, and under the cloak the silver pyx; and in the silver pyx the Reserved Sacrament.

At that moment I was pulling my hind foot a little breathlessly on to the top step. I'm a ruminative character and lack presence of mind, but I understod the situation in a black flash. There was Miss Pulkinhorn swallowed up in the shadows of the east end. Old Rekeby had locked all doors but the north-west one where he would let himself out and was trotting across the chancel, flicking his torch here and there going towards the chapel of the Sacrament—and there *he* was on the pinnacle of his secret happiness, hands lifted, face tilted towards the light.

I turned back and pretty well hurled myself down the wooden stairs. As I came out of the chancel Rekeby was standing in the doorway by the stove. He never noticed *him* there at the back—it was past half-past-six you see. He bustled forward, bobbed to the altar, went up to the aumbry and bobbed again a bit doubtfully. He fumbled for his keys, opened the door, peered into the empty cupboard, and said in a vexed voice: "I thought so!"

He shut the door carefully. Completely unaware of the ecstatic at the back of the chapel he leaned forward and blew out the light.

I COULD have done something, I suppose, shouted "Stop!" or "One moment, Rekeby!" or thrown a fit. But while I was standing there, appalled and useless, Rekeby came out, said "Good-night, Sir Edward," and went back across the chancel, his torch flicking over the patterned stones. I suppose the chapel was silent for ten seconds. Then a voice laughed and choked and laughed and a shadow cannoned into the stove and reeled past me down the north aisle, laughing and crying till all the echoes got under way and answered. I groped after him, and Rekeby was shambling down the south aisle flashing his torch from the pavement to the roof and shouting, "What is it? What is it?"

I found him inside the west door sitting on the step. I put my arm across his shoulders and Rekeby shone the quivering circle over his feet. After a while he stopped crying, but he was quite infantile, and his fingers were moving about. We got him outside between us. I remember a great red moon was detaching itself from the fog and gave next to no light. Rekeby locked the door behind him and we carried him like a long sack to the verger's cottage where we stretched him out on an old horse-hair sofa. Rekeby went to telephone the hospital so I myself had the job of getting the overcoat off him. He was nearly naked under it. All he had on was that

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pair of broken boots and his trousers and a cruel leather belt. And he knew nothing at all. The ambulance men were brisk and efficient—service couldn't have been better. At the hospital he was put to bed, bathed, and tucked up. I went with him but he noticed nobody. I visited him a couple of times after that but I don't suppose he noticed me. A month later he just guttered out.

WHEN I got home from the hospital that first night I went to bed but I couldn't sleep. I went over and over the years and what I knew of them both till my throat was dry and my brain as useless as a pumpkin. I've told you I'm a fairly slow sort of fellow. Do you know, two o'clock struck before it dawned on me that she was still locked in the cathedral? I shot out of bed then and ran to the window. There the cathedral was, huge and squat, with the moonlight glistening icily on the windows. She was inside somewhere, a tiny upright figure in that vast darkness: and by the time I'd got my clothes on I'd come to see that I couldn't let her out.

I wonder how she did it? I suppose she nipped in when the Precentor left, lit the light, and sat right at the back waiting for him to come in. She'd have let him pray to it, I think, and then broken to him gently and lovingly that he was a superstitious fool for his pains and the cupboard was bare. But things went wrong for both of them—he didn't come, you see, so when she thought he was stopping away she went forward to blow out the light—and saw me. If her little wit had been quick enough she could have trumped up some excuse and still put it out—but she lacked presence of mind. She hurried past me not knowing what to say and hid in the east end, trying to think. Then he came after all—late but divinely happy with the one possible excuse for lateness at that appointment. Can you see? Imagine the tramp or labourer stopping him in the foggy back street, asking for the price of a bed, and backing away from the gift of a jacket and grubby shirt pulled off then and there, thrust upon him! So he was late—but think of the tidal wave of joy and triumph that hurried him up the aisle into the chapel and flung him on his knees!

I wonder what she thought standing there in the darkness listening to the end of his humanity? From where I stood in my bedroom I could see the east end and the chapel of the Sacrament. Of course, I thought, in sober fact she could get out whenever she wanted to—switch on the light or ring the five-minute bell. But no. How could so much warped respectability run the slightest risk of being connected with a scandal like that? And I could do nothing without letting her know that I was on to her game. I had to pretend ignorance. She must sit there, a tiny upright figure, while the moon moved down the walls and the effigies crept into the light.

I made tea and sat smoking. There is a kind of justice, isn't there? But I've never known it so apt to the occasion. So she kept her vigil and I kept it with her, so to speak, parallel, till the moon faded and you could see that roofs were red.

MY assistant was surprised to see me next day. I'd forgotten the note and the pistons and in the end I put off the academy and played for the service myself. That wasn't entirely on Canon Blake's behalf either. I was too interested in Miss Pulkinhorn. I wanted to see if she would have the nerve to come, and what the night had done to her. And what effect was apparent, should you say? None. Absolutely none. Brave, blind, indomitable woman! She sat, stood, knelt, opened and closed her mouth exactly as she'd done for twenty years back—a timeless woman. Really I began to think I'd imagined the whole thing, and of course his death made no more stir than the fall of a sparrow. The shadows were much the same, the light burned peacefully in his chapel that was so often empty now.

A few months later the effect broke in Miss Pulkinhorn. I was coming up the north aisle, hurrying because I was near enough late for Evensong. I caught my heel on the step up

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to the ambulatory and the confounded thing came off and wrenched my ankle. I picked the heel up and went limping and muttering past his chapel, and I heard a little shriek inside and a chair fell over. Miss Pulkinhorn came out with great dignity and her usual lapidary expression. But the topaz brooch shivered and jumped and would not be still. I stood back to let her pass and we stopped for a moment, eye meeting eye. Nothing passed between us and everything; an awareness, almost a mutual flinch; and over us both the knowledge that I knew the whole dreadful story from beginning to end. Miss Pulkinhorn in that chapel; Miss Pulkinhorn kneeling before that light; Miss Pulkinhorn watching her defences broken down, abandoning her one by one! Even a rock crumbles. Little by little, day by day, the stick began to shake, and the head. The dress was the same but the woman inside it was destroyed piece by piece. I avoided her from a kind of shame at knowing so much. Going about my business in the cathedral I took to circling and keeping an eye lifted to see if she was in my path. But she made a meeting for us.

ONE night after I'd kept the choir back to run through the anthem for Sunday morning I tried that prelude of mine over again; so the choir had gone and the congregation when I had finished, and I thought the way was safe. But when I came down the stairs from the organ loft Miss Pulkinhorn was sitting on one of the rush-bottom chairs, waiting. She lifted her chin and fastened her eyes on my face and we stood so for—well, it seemed a long time even in a cathedral. There was a little water on her chin which fell when she spoke.

Her words were very slow and distinct.

"Sir Edward. My conscience is perfectly clear."

She turned to go, leaving me as still as the carven figures round us. As she tapped shakily away over the stones I heard her repeating the words to herself.

"—perfectly clear."

A week later she was dead.

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Irving Kristol

High, Low, and Modern

Some Thoughts on Popular Culture and Popular Government

RIMBAUD was unquestionably a great poet. But was he a highbrow? He would generally be so classified today—and yet, the more one considers the matter, the odder it looks. His contemporaries—even his admiring ones, to say nothing of his depreciators—certainly did not see anything "high" about this adventurer-bohemian who experimented with vice as energetically as with poetic forms. He himself would have been more than a little astonished at the description. "High" was where the *Académie Française* was located; Rimbaud was somewhere below, roaming among the cities of the plain.

The term itself, "highbrow," was first publicised in Van Wyck Brooks' historic essay, *America's Coming-of-Age*, which appeared in 1915. It is worth remembering that this essay was by way of being a manifesto of "the modern" in literature and art, and that it was, among other things, *an attack* on the highbrow. By this term, Brooks meant the American equivalent of the French Academy—the "genteel tradition" of letters represented by the New England "Brahmins": Longfellow, Emerson, Lowell, Howells, Aldrich, and co. "Highbrow" culture was "high" culture, that dominating influence on American letters which placed the greatest emphasis, not on creativity itself, but on (1) the continuity of a cultural tradition and (2) the moral role played by art and the artist in the nation's life.

The young moderns, as we know, rejected this notion of cultural statesmanship. They were heirs to a literary tradition only in the sense that it was, in fact, their property—but this property could be used or abused at their pleasure, for they recognised no obligation to it. And they utterly rejected the idea that they were, in any sense, guardians of public morality. This morality wore a Victorian aspect; and so far from preserving it, the young moderns set out to subvert it by every means at their command. It was not, of course, that they—the majority at any rate—were against morality *per se*. What they wanted was to enlarge the moral sense so as to bring into the lives of men (and the arts of men), a freedom, an irreverence, an uninhibitedness, a candour (especially in matters of sex) that had hitherto been lacking.

And no one can say they have not succeeded.

JUST AS THERE IS A DISTINCTION to be made between "highbrow" culture, properly speaking, and the "modern" movement which replaced it, so is there a distinction to be made between the "popular culture" of the last

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century and the "mass culture" of our own.

In the beginning there was only Culture, as defined by tradition and authority. There was never any ambiguity as to who had Culture and who did not—it was entirely a matter of education (though sometimes of self-education). Nor was there any doubt as to who had more or less of it: a man who knew Greek and Hebrew as well as Latin was more Cultured than one who merely knew Latin. Popularisations of this Culture were sometimes provided for the improvement of the uneducated; but not very often.

The uneducated had their entertainments and diversions—singing, dancing, cock-fighting, drinking, fornication, and an occasional festivity at the church. Existing as they did without benefit of anthropology, it never occurred to them or anyone else that this kind of thing could be regarded as Culture, or even as a Sub-culture. But with the spread of printing and literacy in the 18th and 19th century, something that could really be called "popular culture" began to emerge and multiply. It was epitomised by the sentimental romance, the Gothic horror tale, the penny-dreadful Western, the inspirational success story, popularisations of scientific and religious matters, the vast literature of self-improvement, self-help, self-education. There was inevitably some confusion as to whether certain commodities were Culture or "popular culture," especially since the novel, as a literary form, itself emerged from "popular culture" and has never disengaged itself from it. But, on the whole, it was pretty clear what was what and who was who. Nor was there much self-consciousness about the difference. One fails to find, in the 19th century, any serious concern with "popular culture" as a problem. Educated people could ignore it, when they did not surreptitiously enjoy it.

And why not? It was limited in scope, unpretentious in its manner. Most important, it was a highly moral enterprise, in ostensible intent if not always in calculated effect. It accepted the conventional canons—as established by "high culture"—of good and evil, success and failure, in order to weave its narrative around them. Whatever its offence to intelligence and good taste, it did not represent any kind of threat to the moral and political order.

We, in contrast, are very sensitive to "popular culture" as representing just such a threat. To be more exact, we are on the defensive against "mass culture," which is what "popular culture" has become. Whereas "popular culture" was the culture of a class (the uneducated), "mass culture" is a culture shared, to a greater or lesser degree, by everyone. We all watch the same TV shows, read the same advertisements, see the same movies. As a result of the increase in popular wealth, popular taste now has a coercive power such as civilisation has never before witnessed. By its sheer massive presence, "mass culture" tends to crowd culture of any other kind to the margins of society.

One does not want to sound like a prig or a snob. Day-dreams and diversions are the stuff most people's daily lives are made of; the sentimentality, the inanity, the vulgarity of "mass culture" only become objectionable when they impose themselves upon society with such vigour as to set the tone, suggest the values, establish the context of life both private *and* public. And this is undeniably what is happening in the modern democracies.

And yet one wonders: is it that "mass culture" is so powerful, or that its opposition is so impotent? A clue is provided by the tendency—not in itself so very surprising—of "mass culture" to degenerate into pornography. Now, pornography is, or need be, a problem of no great importance; one certainly would not want to do without it entirely. But what is revealing, as concerns both pornography itself and the larger problem of mass culture, is the complete inability of the "natural" leaders of opinion in the community—the educated class in general, the intellectuals in particular—to deal with this problem.

WHAT is pornography? The fact that we ask this question in genuine puzzlement is itself a cultural phenomenon of the greatest symbolic significance. It testi-

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fies to the fact that the educated class has lost its footing. And this, in turn, is connected with the fact that the educated class of to-day is not "highbrow" at all, but post-highbrow, i.e., "modern." Its difficulties in reaching firm opinions on the "mass culture" which it apprehensively confronts, derive from its kinship with it. As Leslie Fiedler has pointed out in ENCOUNTER (August, 1955):

> It has been charged against vulgar art that it is sadistic, fetishistic, brutal, full of terror; that it pictures women with exaggeratedly full breasts and rumps, portrays death on the printed page, is often covertly homosexual, etc., etc. About these charges there are two obvious things to say. First, by and large, they are true. Second, they are also true about much of the most serious art of our time. . . . There is no count of sadism and brutality which could not be equally proved against Hemingway or Faulkner. . . . Historically, one can make quite a convincing case to prove that our highest and lowest arts come from a common antibourgeois source . . . ; and there is a direct line from Hemingway to O'Hara to Dashiell Hammett to Raymond Chandler to Mickey Spillane.

The educated class of to-day, formed by the "modern" revolt against the "highbrow," is faced with the difficult task of rejecting pornography without repudiating itself. And the only reason this question of pornography is so provocative is that the startling lack of a ready answer makes it so.

THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENTIATING between art and pornography has never been easy, if only because some pornographers are awfully talented. In our day, the task is well nigh impossible, and few there are (and these not necessarily the best equipped) who can face it. Thus, most members of the educated class in America will concede that pornography ought to be the object of legal sanctions. But these same people have never defined what pornography is; have never made any effort to discover such a definition; have resisted all urgings that they make such an effort. And, indeed, anyone who displays a genuine concern for the issue is regarded suspiciously as an enemy of art, an enemy of promise, an enemy of the free in spirit.

Instead of facing up to the issue, an elaborate ideology of evasion has been constructed. This ideology employs various arguments, as the occasion allows, but it relies primarily on the arguments from ignorance: We do not know what pornography is, because standards of propriety and decency are always changing. We do not know what the effects of pornography are upon the consumer; it is always possible that, by the vicarious discharge of sadistic aggressions, an individual's mental health may be, if not improved, then at least maintained in equilibrium. We do not know whether comic books that glorify brutality actually make children more brutal. We do not know—oh, there is so much we do not know! Only the other day a prominent American political scientist at one of our best universities argued before the Federal Communications Commission that it should not interfere with certain "objectionable" TV programmes until a massive (and, needless to say, expensive) study had been made to determine what effects, if any, such programmes had upon children.

No one can deny that all these arguments from ignorance have an element of truth in them. The only thing wrong with them is that they are impossible to live by. As cautions, they have their merit. But as guides, they lead nowhere. What they add up to is the assertion that we can never be sure of the difference between right and wrong, good and evil. True enough; but that is not the same thing as saying there is *no* difference between right and wrong, good and evil. And if such a distinction is made, it will have a bearing upon how we operate—or allow to operate—our mass entertainment media, our journalism, our book publishing, our educational system.

BUT who is going to make this authoritative distinction? And how?

In the United States, the American Civil Liberties Union is always appearing in court to defend provocatively illustrated magazines, reeking with sadism and sly perversion, against police prosecution; its plea is that such legal action is an interference with literary freedom. And when the prosecuting

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attorney denies that these sheets can be regarded as literature at all, the ACLU retorts (and I quote): "It is submitted, however, that any differences are those of taste." And it goes without saying that *de gustibus non* . . . etc. The net result is that the laws against pornography in the United States are enforced in an utterly capricious manner. Edmund Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County* is banned in New York State; *Playboy* circulates freely. This is what is bound to happen when the definition of "literature" is something that literary men, as a matter of æsthetic and political principle, refuse to essay.

Here we return to that central fact of the modern cultural situation: the destruction of the older "highbrow" élite whose declared purpose, and recognised function, was to "maintain standards." To some extent this élite was robbed of its authority by the rise of the "scientific expert" as the authoritative figure, in place of the "educated man." And the scientist naturally has a scepticism towards standards in general, emphasising their "relative" nature. But mainly it was overthrown by the advent of "the modern" in arts and letters—a movement which denied the very legitimacy of this kind of authority, and which insisted that to be genuinely creative the artist had to be free to create his own standards, as well as his own art.

In those cases where fragments of the older élite still survive and exercise some influence (notably in England), they are regarded as figures of fun, rather ludicrous anachronisms. One has only to mention the name of Lord Reith to a London literary audience to evoke a smile—because Lord Reith, as Director-General of the BBC in its formative years, put great emphasis on "maintaining standards." His BBC was exceedingly proper and unadventurous, respectful towards constituted authority and the taboos of middle-class morals. He was, moreover, solemnly patronising of his audience. If the BBC provided a Light Programme, it was not merely because ordinary people wanted and deserved a spot of fun; the Light Programme had to be slanted in such a way that, in theory, it gently led its listeners upwards towards the slightly more serious Home Programme; and the Home was similarly inclined towards the Third Programme, at which apex one was fortunate enough to listen to either the bland chatter of Oxford dons or learned sermons on Original Sin.

Lord Reith is gone, and his spirit only intermittently flutters over the air-waves. Instead of the stuffy Establishment of yesteryear there is Commercial Television *à l'Américaine* and a BBC television that is scarcely to be distinguished from the commercial variety. Already parents are indignant at the things their children (and, more rarely, themselves) are exposed to. A huge (and expensive) study by the Nuffield Foundation of the effects of TV on children came up with no definite conclusions; but people do not always need a social scientist to tell them what is happening in their homes. Those same sophisticates who were irritated to death by Lord Reith and all he stood for, are now outraged by commercial television and all it stands for. But no one knows quite what to do. . . . To be sure, one can always blame America; but not, convincingly, for long.

It is impossible genuinely to mourn the passing of the Mandarins and Brahmins of the older "highbrow" élite. Not all the things said against them were true or fair, by a long shot. But they not only deserved their fate; they positively courted it. Their notion of defending standards came to mean, in practice, a vigilant hostility to creative talent, as against mere mimicry. Above all, they seemed unaware of the fact that young people needed something more in life than the benevolent assurance that they would soon be middle-aged. And so they ended (or are ending) their days as sullen and sneering fulminators against modern "degeneracy" as exemplified by T. S. Eliot, Picasso, Stravinsky, etc.—their only audience, ironically, the popular press.

But now that they are gone, who is to do their job? *Someone* has to be able to say, with assurance and a measure of authority, what

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is culture and what is not, what is decent and what is not. There must be some group or class that is admittedly competent to decide —not without error, but more wisely than anyone else—questions of moral and cultural value. Otherwise, a necessary and vital element of order in the life of a society will be lacking.

Recently, in the United States, religious leaders, educators, and spokesmen for parents' organisations complained to the Federal Communications Commission that there was too much violence on TV. To which they received the official rejoinder that there is a great deal of violence in *Hamlet* too—and how could the United States Government lay down one rule for *Hamlet* and another for *Peter Gunn*? How could the United States Government set itself up as an arbiter of taste? This was, presumably, reserved for the advertising agencies who are the only ones to show a passionate interest in the subject.

In England, the London County Council has withdrawn the tax exemption previously granted to the London Library, a private subscription library much used (and much beloved) by scholars, writers, and educated people generally. The Council authorities declared that some people enjoyed going to the movies, others enjoyed going to a library, and why should the pleasure of one be privileged above that of the other? Why indeed? Who is going to come out and say that, as a matter of principle, people who read good books in their leisure time should be privileged as against people who go to the movies? And who, if he does say this, will be listened to?

What it comes down to is this: we seem to have manœuvred ourselves into a situation in which the men of letters, the "intellectual" class, jealous of their own hard-won freedom from previous restrictions and suspicious of the state's meddling with questions of art, have made it extremely difficult for society as a whole to give official recognition to *Hamlet* as against, say, *Headquarters Detective*. Such instances of official recognition do exist, to be sure. But most of them go back some years, and are survivals rather than precedents.

Not only is there no class of people which can be regarded as both representing and forming "public opinion" on matters of culture. The very idea that such a class *might* exist is fast becoming nebulous. For instance, a prominent American sociologist, until recently a dean in a major university, conducted a study of American reading habits, and arrived at the following conclusions:

> Not only does the frequency of book-reading vary markedly, it is also unevenly distributed among the constituent groups of the community. For a variety of reasons some kinds of people read a great deal more and some not much. The major factor which differentiates readers from non-readers in research to date is education —in the limited sense of number of years of formal schooling. The more years of schooling the individual has, the more likely he is to read books. In one national survey only twelve per cent of the college-educated had not read a book in the preceding year as against seventy-five per cent of those with only grammar school education or less.
>
> Now, this might mean several things. It might mean that additional schooling has improved the individual's basic reading skills, or that it has developed his reading habits, or that it has produced in him the types of interests which are ordinarily satisfied by books, or even that the people who go on to further schooling already have a reading disposition which formal education only reinforces.

The ignorance is feigned, one knows. Our sociologist is not really puzzled as to why educated people read more books than non-educated people. He simply believes that he *ought* to be puzzled—and that is what is really interesting. For what it means is that the very existence of "culture" in the traditional sense of the term, the very idea of "the cultivated man," is but dimly apprehended. In place of a prescriptive definition of "culture" we have an anthropological-sociological one. "Culture" is whatever people do—some employ "reading skills" directed towards books, others presumably employ "viewing skills" directed towards TV; and the empirical fact that "reading skills" seem to be connected with education is a statistical correlation that needs further research to be explained.

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Ludicrous as this is, it is but a *reductio ad absurdum* of a recognisable tendency, within all the Western democracies, for education—even higher education—to divorce itself from the task of forming character, habits, and tastes. Sometimes this is done candidly in the name of vocational training. At other times it proceeds under the guise of allowing "free development" to the students' natural bent. The end result is the same: the disappearance of a class of people which—by virtue of being educated—shares a cultural patrimony and is accepted by the community as providing spokesmen for this patrimony.

Even in those places where it is still taken for granted that education has something to do with reading books, what is ignored is that the educated person is one who has learned how to read, enjoy, and profit from *certain kinds* of books—kinds that are defined by the cultural tradition. Future historians may yet decide that one of the crucial events of our century, perhaps decisive for its cultural *and* political destiny, was the gradual dissolution and abandonment of the study of the classics as the core of the school curriculum. We all know the many reasons (some of them cogent enough) why this happened. But we fail to appreciate sufficiently the extent to which it destroyed a vital constituency of any well-ordered society; and the manner in which our failure to define a new core for the educational process helped open the way to what can only be called the subversion of public morality in the democratic nations.

PUBLIC morality? The phrase sounds almost archaic. Most young people today, if asked what it meant, would probably refer vaguely to prohibitions against necking on the beach during daylight, or perhaps to the disapproval that attaches to a public official who flagrantly appropriates public funds for his private pleasure. Yet until not so very long ago, anyone who had ever given thought to the matter would have asserted, as a matter of course, that the ultimate basis of popular government was what in America was called republican morals, and in England civic virtue. As Edmund Burke put it: "Men are qualified for civil liberty, in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their appetites; in proportion as their love of justice is above their rapacity; in proportion as their soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption. . . ." Similar sentiments were expressed by Madison, Jefferson, and Washington. If Burke was no believer in popular government, it was because he placed a lower estimate on the average man's moral capacities than did the Founding Fathers of the United States. There was no disagreement between them, however, on the fact that self-government was a distinctively moral enterprise.

This moral component of political life has, over the past decades, been depreciated. Ours is an age that is hypnotised by Impersonal Forces. We instinctively regard ourselves as their creatures, and we find our freedom in cajoling, mollifying, and humouring them. Much of our political activity can be described, without malice, as efforts to build socialism without socialists, communism without communists, democracy without democrats. Whenever we discuss the prospects for democracy in one of the new nations of Africa or Asia, we analyse the rate of economic growth, the efficiency of the civil service, the loyalty of the armed forces, the number of schools per ten thousand children, etc. We never enquire whether the people display those particular dispositions of mind and character that make popular government workable.

What are these dispositions? This is a large question, and any short answer will be inadequate. But it is not too gross an oversimplification to say that included among them must be: a veneration for the rule of law as against the rule of men; a reliance on common reason as the dominant human motive, as against superstition or passion; a sense of community that transcends class divisions and the recognition of a common good beyond individual benefits; a scrupulous use of liberties towards these ends for which those liberties were granted; a distribution of

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wealth and inequalities according to principles generally accepted as legitimate; moderation in the temper of public debate and public demeanour; etc. In every historical case one can think of, these attributes have been prior and prerequisite to democratic government. When they did not exist, or where they did not exist sufficiently strongly, democratic government faltered. And if a democratic government fails to sustain and encourage them, it is undermining its own foundations.

For, in the end, democratic government is governed by reasonable public opinion. And reasonable public opinion is not merely one that may be "well-informed" on matters within its comprehension and relevant to its judgment. It is, by definition and above all, an opinion that *wants* to be reasonable and truthful. This is the moral fundament of democracy; and it is this moral fundament that is under constant assault by much of that "mass culture" which is now being distributed through the mass media.

TAKE advertising, for instance, which plays so dominant a role in modern life that large numbers of people cannot bring themselves to read a magazine or watch a TV show that is not adorned with the familiar ads—they feel it is not really directed at them, that there is something "queer" about it. The bulk of advertising consists of lies, spiced with half-truths. The advertiser knows this; the advertising agencies know it; the consumers know it; the toddling infants know it. The "advertising game" is quite literally that—an effort to sell commodities by producing the most attractive, the most ingenious, the most beguiling hokum. Since everyone understands it is hokum, there is little substance to the nightmarish dread, evoked by some writers, of a society eventually to be ruled by a self-appointed élite of "hidden persuaders." The importation of advertising techniques into political campaigns is a disaster, not because they will produce a political Svengali, not because they play upon credulity, but because they create a universal disbelief and cynicism. Political rhetoric is debauched; the statesman's plea becomes indistinguishable from the huckster's "pitch;" persuasion merges into demagoguery—and is calmly accepted as indispensable to "politics."

Another instance: popular journalism. We are all well aware that a large section of the popular press makes no effort to report the news honestly. Frequently this is a result of political bias; more frequently it flows from a knowledge of what will capture the interest and titillate the prejudices of its readers. This phenomenon is now so common as to seem unremarkable—it is accepted as part of the democratic scheme of things and is shrugged off with an expression of "democratic faith:" in a free competition between truth and falsehood for dominion over the minds of men, truth will eventually win out.

Yet no sensible man, contemplating the history of the human race, could seriously claim that truth always prevails over falsehood. And it is interesting to observe that this was *not* the claim of those who founded and formulated the philosophy of liberal democracy. What they said was that in a free competition between truth and *error*, the victory would finally be on the side of truth. The difference is by no means negligible. It is possible for truth to debate with error, to define itself in the very process of this debate, and for public opinion to be enlightened by the spectacle. But deliberate and cynical falsehood does not merely controvert truth; it challenges the idea which is at the heart of popular government: that the recognition of truth is not only a human but also a civic obligation. There is no such thing as a democratic right to lie, or a democratic freedom to lie. Such a liberty is reserved for a despotic society, whose State has its reasons that the citizen knoweth not. In contrast, democracy has an organic relation to enlightenment and truth.

Yet it is just this relation which is now being cavalierly discarded. Thus, Mr. Francis Williams, an experienced and eminent British journalist on the Left, has made a distinction (ENCOUNTER, February 1960) between "serious" and "mass circulation" news-

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papers, allocating to the former the business of "informing and persuading public opinion" and to the latter the task of "expressing the emotions—and often no doubt the prejudice, ignorance, and silliness—of its readers." This is an entirely novel conception of the function of a free press, and it implies an entirely novel conception of democracy as that system of society which allows people to give the freest expression to their emotions, their ignorance, their silliness. It is doubtful that such a society could exist; but it is certain that (a) no rational argument could be made in its defence, and (b) no popular government could long survive in it.

IT IS often said that "mass culture" is the price we pay for democracy. That all depends, of course, on what we mean by democracy.

If we mean by democracy nothing more than government which is freely consented to by the people, then this may well be so. In that case, one can either deny that "mass culture" poses any problem at all, and attribute our unease to the influence of "predemocratic" standards of taste and culture upon our laggard imaginations; or one can seek reassurance in the belief that "mass culture" is only a passing phase of democratic evolution, and that in due course of time the level of popular taste and judgment will rise to nobler heights. Both alternatives involve an act of faith in The People, resting on the premise that what emerges from them is necessarily good and/or necessarily self-correcting.

This may be called the Populist religion of democracy, and there is no question but that it is the most common in our day. This can be seen from the frequency with which our publicists and statesmen make appeal to "the democratic faith" and "the democratic creed" as against other faiths and creeds, notably Communism. It is also interesting to observe that when the advertising and television industries feel the need to perform acts of "public service" they conceive of their mission as "selling" this democratic faith to all and sundry.

Like all political religions, this one is relatively invulnerable to rational examination and critique. But, again like all political religions, it has to face the test of reality. And the reality seems to be that this idea of popular government, in so far as it is most loyally put into practice, has a tendency to become unpopular—there is certainly more open dissatisfaction with "the democratic faith" in America to-day than there was fifty years ago, when the barest hint of scepticism was tantamount to treason. Nor is there anything paradoxical about this state of affairs; it simply reflects the fact that what people want (or think they want) is not inevitably identical with—and may even contradict—what they need (*i.e.*, what will truly satisfy them).

But this is not the only conception of democracy. And though it is now sovereign as an ideology, it is not the idea on which democracy in America and Britain was founded and which, to a greater or lesser degree, still rules the actual operations of government. That this is so in the United States is demonstrable by pointing to the existence of the Supreme Court—nine judges, appointed for life, with the power to nullify legislation (no matter how popular) that, in their considered opinion, is "unconstitutional" (a concept more vague than precise). There can be no doubt that, were a constitutional convention to be held to-day, no such thing as a Supreme Court could be set up—it would be regarded as flagrantly "undemocratic." (In those newer nations of Africa and Asia which have patterned themselves after the American system, either there is no such court or its powers are more formal than real.) Yet the Supreme Court, as originally established, has become an almost sacred institution, with which no politician dares tamper. In part, this is the sanctity that comes naturally with age. But in larger part, it is a tacit recognition that democratic government is something more than government that is popular in its origin: it is government that seeks justice as its aim.

It might be said that this is not a unique characteristic of democratic government, but is rather claimed by governments of all kinds.

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And it is indeed so. What this emphasises is merely that democracy is not a self-justifying system of government; that it is not divinely ordained, any more than absolute monarchy is; and that the problem of reconciling popular government with good government is a very real one.

And it is when one takes this problem seriously that one must take "mass culture" seriously. We have more evidence than we need or like that popular government can be oppressive, capricious, inadequate to its responsibilities. We have abundant testimony, too, to the truth that institutional safeguards, needed as they are, are not sufficient by themselves to protect a people against its own imprudence, its own passions. For these institutions cannot work unless they are respected, unless their legitimacy is freely acknowledged. And such respect and acknowledgment can only come from a people whose moral sense is sufficiently firm to know, not only that right and wrong exist, but that the distinguishing between them is not something they can achieve instinctively and unaided.

In the measure that people are encouraged to believe that what they want coincides with what they ought to want; in the measure that the mass media conceives it as its function to pander to "the prejudice, ignorance, and silliness" of its audience—in just such a measure is the moral fibre of democracy corrupted.

APOLOGISTS for the crudities of "mass culture" are fond of pointing out that it is really nothing new—that the favourite sport of the English people, until it was abolished by law in 1835, was bear-baiting. Quite true. But what is overlooked is that, before 1835, there was hardly a thoughtful man who believed the mass of the English people to be ready for self-government by universal suffrage. This is not because (as our text-books say) the very idea of democracy was novel and unfamiliar. Any educated person of that day knew a great deal about Periclean Athens and the Greek city-state. What he could not see was any resemblance between the Athenians who took part in popular assemblies and the Englishmen who took part in bear-baiting.

According to the Greek philosophers, the virtuous man was the man who exercised "self-government" over himself—over his passions, his impulses, his prejudices, his reasonings. Without such self-government in the individual, there could be no self-government in the state. Modern popular government is, of course, necessarily different from the Greek version. It involves large and representative republics rather than small and direct democracies. Only a utopian could expect virtuous men to be counted in the millions and tens of millions; the very difficulty of educating such a large number precludes it. But it is not utopian—or at least was not thought so by the thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries who fathered the democratic idea—to believe that even such large numbers, suitably enlightened by instruction and example, could attain to a general level of decency and responsibility that allowed (though it could not, naturally, guarantee) virtuous and wise leadership to be exercised over them.

Whether such leadership will be forthcoming is the critical question that faces modern democracy. We know perhaps too well that democracy is government of, by, and for the people. What we need to remember is that, according to Thomas Jefferson, democracy was also a system in which "the natural aristocracy" of talent and virtue would find its most perfect fulfilment and satisfaction.

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Robert Holles

Death of a Magazine

The End of "John Bull"

THE passing of *John Bull*, aged 54 years, into the limbo of copyright magazine titles which nobody wants to use, did not arouse any great shout of sorrow, pain, or mortification. Perhaps it is because of the way a magazine dies nowadays. Quite often it will suddenly collapse in mid-serial. The next part of the serial is carried over, for the benefit of the late magazine's readers, into the magazine in which it has been "incorporated." The corpse will be carried, for a short season, on the front page of its successor.

In recent times *John Bull* itself was a regular attendant at similar funerals. In October, 1958, its front page carried *Illustrated*, an old stable companion, to the cemetery. Six months later the title rights to *Everybody's* were purchased from Fleetway for a reputed £25,000, just in time to see that upstart to the grave. On each occasion about half the readerships of the defunct publications came over, did not like what they saw, and drifted away within a month or two leaving the *John Bull* circulation hovering around the precarious million.

That the chief pall-bearer should now be given a similar kind of carpet-slippered burial seems an incongruous shift of fate. It is that and more. The demise of *John Bull* marks the end, at least for the time being, of a whole genre of general weekly magazines. It is a little alarming to reflect that in the last fifteen years all the popular "middlebrow" periodicals in the country have failed. We are left with a magazine and Sunday newspaper coverage which presupposes that the population is composed of ten per cent articulate egghead and sixty per cent sniggering halfwit, with a balance of women who are obsessed with frustrated romance and the latest knitting patterns.

The fall of *Picture Post* and *Illustrated* might have been predicted after commercial television had become established—yet France's *Paris Match* continues to flourish in face of similar competition. In the United States a whole range of national magazines, headed by the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Life*, enjoy immense popularity without ever seeming to descend to the dreary triviality-and-sensationalism compound which is fast becoming the norm over here.

SEVERAL reasons have become current in journalistic and publishing circles for the remarkable failure of general magazines in Britain. "Television" is one of the principal whipping-boys. It is true that the advent of commercial television caused a famine in magazine advertising which posed serious financial problems for *John Bull* and its contemporaries; but in the past year the situation has shown signs of easing. Another popular reason runs as follows: in Britain, like it or not, we have a public which reads more newspapers than any other nation. Due to the small size of the country and the excellence of its communications, people get their newspapers easily and rapidly and tend to read them to the exclusion of magazines. In America conditions are exactly the reverse. There is also a theory that in Britain to-day there is a large and inexplicable gap between the readership of such publications as *Weekend* and *The People*, and that of the *Sunday Times*. This assumption—that there is nothing in the middle—has always seemed to be a dangerous one. It provides the perfect ready-to-wear excuse for cutting a slice a little further down the cone of public taste.

Whether, in fact, the general magazine market has been killed by accountants, or squeezed out of existence by newspapers, women's magazines,

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lack of flair, or any combination of these factors is problematical. The true function of *John Bull* and other magazines of its kind was to entertain, to educate, to present facts in an interesting way, to reach behind the headlines. They were not in competition with the big daily newspapers; the three-week production gap for most photogravure magazines ruled out any hope of immediacy. The advantages lay in better presentation, wider research, in editorial notions which had been properly thought out. The newspaper feature-writer must usually produce his piece for the next day's issue; his research might consist of an interview, a couple of telephone calls, and a visit to the cuttings library. At *John Bull* it wasn't unusual for a writer to conduct 12–15 interviews during the research for one 2,000-word article, and spend up to a month on the job.

So what we aimed at was "a bright magazine for the family" packed with good middlebrow fiction, adventure, war stories, romance, backed up with super-newspaper articles.

One immediate result of the failure of this formula, and similar ones, will be the further depression of the markets for young writers. The general magazines carried virtually all the short stories published in Britain, outside the women's magazines. In a normal week the fiction department in *John Bull* received about 150 short stories from amateurs. Nearly all earned a rejection slip, not always because of the quality of the writing, but because few of the stories fitted into the tight commercial formula of the magazine. This may not be the ideal way for aspiring writers to flourish, but it is better than nothing. The magazine also offered a chance to young non-fiction writers who didn't want to get involved in Fleet Street. A number were taken on regardless of experience, trained in the ways of the magazine, and given a long period of probation as feature-writers. Compared with the outlets for writing talent in other countries, the prospect in Britain seems to have become terribly bleak.

WHEN I first joined *John Bull* as a feature-writer in 1956 I opened some of the large red volumes of old numbers which were stacked in the writers' room, and looked inside. In the days of Horatio Bottomley the magazine proclaimed its policy at the top of the front page.

Politics without Party—Criticism without Cant,
Without Fear or Favour—Rancour or Rant.

I was soon to discover that the policy of the magazine had changed appreciably since those days. There were no politics at all, with or without party, other than a vaguely "Leftish" approach to social questions. Criticism amounted to nothing more than a sly dig at a swollen-headed film star or pompous prelate. There was at the time a very real fear, soon to be justified, that commercial television was going to corner most of the advertising which enabled the magazine to be run at a profit.

There was certainly no rancour or rant. *John Bull* set out only to please.

In 1956 the magazine had just passed its post-war peak and was beginning to decline, although the circulation still remained healthily at around 1,200,000. Since the end of the war it had remained popular while others of its kind were sagging. In the early 'fifties this popularity was maintained by the successive serialisation of best-selling war books—*The Dam Busters*, *Reach for the Sky*—fortified by the life stories of show-business personalities. So that by the middle 'fifties it had settled into a recognisable mould.

The fiction had resolved itself into a safe, middle-of-the-road vehicle for such hardy professionals as Nevile Shute, Agatha Christie, P. G. Wodehouse, and C. S. Forester. Short stories followed a similar pattern of romance, detection, humour, adventure. The non-fiction serials were involved with war, personal drama, and exotic adventures on mountain tops or in jungles. But the feature articles were the real heart of the magazine. The general idea was to make the reader happy and keep him that way. A bit of excitement was a good bet.

Car 36 heads for Danger.
Battle in the Flames.

Particularly if you could add a dash of glamour by getting a woman involved:

Ingrid Rides the Wall of Death.
The Kid Sister roars off to Monte Carlo.

Glamour, of course, was vital:

Mr. Ballyhoo Blows Filmland's Trumpets.
My Champagne Safaris.

But the one thing that everybody was vitally interested in was money:

Dogs on the Dollar Track.
Can you afford Justice?
There's Money in Tiddlers.
Money on the Scrapheap.

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The essential need in every issue was reader-identification.

Miracle In Your Office.
Any Complaints on the 7.30?
Wanted—A square deal for Motorists.

Who were the readers who were expected to identify themselves with the situations and problems presented for their perusal every Wednesday? Perhaps the best clue to the magazine's appraisal of its readership lies in the cover illustrations; for there, week after week, the hypothetical John Bull family was depicted.

In fifty covers which I have taken at random from issues of the last three years an entire family is shown 15 times, the husband and wife 12 times, and one of the parents with the children 10 times.

Invariably they are involved in a "typical" situation. The wife holds a candle while her husband fixes a fuse. He watches her wryly as she gossips on the telephone. He mops his brow at the end of a hectic children's party, while the children, unweary, cluster round the television set.

The families are invariably in the middle-income group. On one cover dated January, 1957, the wife and two smiling children study a holiday brochure. The wife glances anxiously at the husband who is totting up his monthly accounts. "France, Spain, or just a châlet in Devon?" enquires the blurb. "Well, it all depends on the cheque-book."

The children are all well-dressed, happy, and obviously "well-adjusted." The younger ones go to prep schools. The women are attractive but not beautiful, the men handsome but weighed down a little by domestic worries. Both parents are under forty and over twenty-five.

The family lives in a well-designed, semi-detached house. Its members are addicted to television, keep pets, like gardening. The husband runs a small car in which, during the summer, he frequently takes his wife and child down to the seaside. Their household equipment includes a telephone and a vacuum cleaner; prints of flowers hang in the marital bedroom. They are always smart and well turned-out; they never manage to look casual, even on the beach. They only go to church to get married. It is difficult to imagine them drunk. Relations between husband and wife are sometimes a little strained, but normally excellent. Their lives are never afflicted by ugliness. They would like a little more in the weekly pay packet; but on the whole they have "never had it so good."

Only one cover among the fifty has a proletarian flavour. This depicts two roadmen shovelling snow. Both are immaculately dressed for the job. The middle-class balance is restored by a group of watching boys who wear prep school uniforms.

AMONG the seventeen covers of the fifty where weather conditions are shown, the sun is shining from a blue sky in thirteen. In two, conditions are cloudy. It is raining once and snowing once; but in both these cases the climatic conditions are essential to the "situation."

This sunshine spilled over into the feature pages. We sometimes set out to surprise—*How much does Easter cost you?*—but never to shock rudely.

The word "cancer" when it cropped up in a manuscript would be firmly expunged and replaced by "a serious illness." In the popular medical articles which appeared fairly often, all the case histories used as illustrations had to be successful ones. The attitude to sex was prudish to an almost Victorian degree. A writer who included a fox-hunting anecdote in an article had it struck out in order to avoid upsetting the anti-hunting fraternity.

Controversy was usually avoided altogether; during the last four years of *John Bull* there was no column of editorial opinion. One or two well-tried subjects of argument were sometimes given an airing—vivisection, unwanted children in Britain—but the magazine never got itself involved in anything so hotly contentious as—for example—*apartheid*. At the height of the Suez affair the *John Bull* writers continued imperturbably to collect material for future articles on such subjects as crime prevention, cross-country cycle races, and *Dora Bryan's Gay Life of Crisis*.

At this period the hard core of all the magazine features was the anecdote. For the writers, research on most articles consisted largely of collecting facts and anecdotes. When enough anecdotes had been gathered—and they were often appallingly hard to find—the writer sat down and wrote his piece. Basically, there were two kinds of article: the "profile" and the "job piece." Up to 1958 virtually every issue, containing 3–4 articles, included a job piece, and one in two carried a profile.

The job piece set out to give a lively picture of Britain at work. For years an unceasing file of characters—a tugboat skipper, a steamroller

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driver, a puppeteer, a maker of musical instruments, a breeder of exotic birds, a gliding instructor—and scores of others, marched through the columns of *John Bull*, each of them accorded a short blast of minor-celebrity status before being whisked back to obscurity. For the job piece there was a rigid and inflexible formula. No opinions were expressed, no writer comment was allowed to intrude; all was concentrated on the work in hand. There was always an opening anecdote which was designed to put the principal character on the stage, reveal his job, and show him typically—and as dramatically as possible—doing it:

> A large fragment of Portland stone fell from a cornice on the Royal Staff College, Camberley, a few years ago, and narrowly missed the Commandant. Some time later Peter Cox, the founder of a firm of stone restorers, walked round the building, estimating its condition with the aid of a pair of binoculars.

One line was usually permitted for a physical summing-up of the character who was being portrayed, before going on to establish his exact status, and placing him in a wider perspective.

> A big man, easy-natured, and bluff as a sea wall, Dutton is one of five district inspectors employed by the R.N.L.I. to cover its 151 lifeboat stations along the coastline of Britain.

Having properly introduced his character, the writer would leave him for a couple of paragraphs in order to hammer home a solid barrage of facts and details about his profession:

> The British Judo Association, formed in 1948 to handle a rapidly-growing interest in the sport, claims a total of more than 400 affiliated clubs in Britain and a membership of 30,000 of whom one thousand are women. . . .

Then he would be free to drive ahead with a further bout of anecdotes.

Nearly all the articles in the magazine at that time wore a strait-jacket of mechanical prose. Perfection lay somewhere on the other side. Like the strong men who used to perform on Tower Hill, we had to put the garment on and get out of it by ourselves.

But for the "inside" writers who provided the bulk of the features, there was no deviation from the rules; experiments in other forms of construction were never encouraged. A critic of the magazine complained, a few years ago, that "the articles in *John Bull* show more signs of perspiration than inspiration." This remark expressed the merits, as well as the principal flaw, of the magazine's feature pages. There is nothing wrong with honest sweat in any department. The fault was that the perspiration showed.

The feature articles in the magazine were, in fact, more deeply researched than any which regularly appeared in any other British publication, and conformed to a very high standard of accuracy. It was a regular practice for *John Bull* writers to send a draft copy of their notes from an interview back to the person interviewed for checking. Yet the magazine never managed to achieve a reputation for accuracy. This may have been due to the fact that not many people recognise accuracy when they see it; more likely, it could be traced to the curious way in which *John Bull* was promoted. Publicity seemed always geared to the lower levels of public taste. Press advertisements frequently presented a false account of the character of the magazine by shrieking all the well-worn clichés of sensation. An article published under the name of Tommy Steele, on the subject of teenagers (*I ought to know—I used to be one myself*) would be obviously considered more worthy of a national publicity campaign than one, say, by Bertrand Russell on the subject of disarmament.

EACH *John Bull* article contained one idea—the one which gave it birth. This was carefully selected after vetting by an editorial team which would pass perhaps one idea in every ten submitted. In most cases the idea would be sharply angled—unless it was one of the stock job-pieces. Quite often it would take the form of a question:

> *Would You Throw Your M.P. Out?*
> *Are We a Nation of Pilferers?*

The question would never be definitely answered—but the weight of evidence, the mass of facts, details, and anecdotes gleaned from political organisations, M.P.s, police chiefs, store detectives, white papers, press cuttings, and research agencies, would tend to suggest an answer in the affirmative. For every article had to take a positive line.

To this end, all the material would bend one way—in the direction of the central idea. This was particularly true of the profile, where a preordained character pattern had to be followed throughout:

> *Lollo Returns to do Battle.*
> *Golden Gurgles from the Kitchen Sink* (Vera Lynn).
> *When Foster Dulles opens his Mouth . . .*

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A "knocking" line was always preferred to one which was eulogistic.

Why They Can't Stand Rex Harrison.

The writer who had been given a profile to do would find out from the press cuttings, and from the evidence of his first two or three interviews, his subject's most prominent—or most interesting—characteristic, then proceed to develop it anecdotally.

> Appearing with Jimmy Edwards in the show, *London Laughs*, Vera Lynn developed migraine. Someone informed Edwards. He told Vera, "If you feel a headache coming on when you are on stage, let me know, and I'll get through the act as quickly as possible."
>
> A few nights later they were on stage together. Vera's hand fluttered to her forehead. Jimmy Edwards tore through the remainder of his clowning. Down came the curtain.
>
> Backstage he sought Vera out to sympathise. She told him, "I'm quite all right really, Jimmy. I suddenly remembered that I left a ham boiling at home this morning."

And the article would plunge on for a further two thousand words on the same theme. No reader, devouring the subsequent smooth catalogue of homeliness, bad temper, parsimony, or benevolence (a rare event) could possibly have realised with what patience, hard graft, and artifice it had been compiled.

SOON after I had mastered the basic forms of feature-writing as practised on *John Bull*, I discovered a significant fact. The "family"—apart from what it could glean from the television programmes—was completely cut off from art and culture, and this I determined to put right.

Here I met with some difficulty. The rule of the magazine was that while you could obliquely slip culture under the belt of the masses, you couldn't serve it to them neat. It had to be wrapped up in a more acceptable formula; money, perhaps, or glamour, or "a modern trend. . . ."

It took me a long time to wriggle some acceptably-angled ideas through the net. Eventually I managed one or two.

The Orchestra That's Always Hard Up.

When I began the research I found that much greater difficulties lay ahead. People engaged in the British arts—musicians, painters, theatrical producers—seemed, curiously, surprisingly indifferent to publicity. Very few of the orchestra members seemed keen on discussing the economics of their lives and hard-up times. All the ones I interviewed looked reasonably well-heeled; none seemed to have so much as a leather patch on the elbow of a sports jacket. I had to be satisfied with a couple of old balance-sheets and a clutch of intriguing, but unprintable anecdotes about a famous conductor. An idea on the Arts Council (which I smuggled through on the "job piece" peg) was an even more dismal failure. As I sat in a spacious office overlooking St. James's Square, trying to prise anecdotes from a girl assistant whose task was to arrange and organise provincial art exhibitions, I had an uneasy conviction that she regarded me as the incarnation of all the excesses of Fleet Street.

> "Has anybody ever dropped a valuable piece of statuary, or anything?"
>
> "Not to my knowledge. We did have a lot of difficulty at Cheltenham once with a big piece by Henry Moore."
>
> "What was that?"
>
> "Well, it wouldn't go in through the door of the gallery. Eventually we had to take out a window frame."
>
> "Anything else unusual?"
>
> "Not really. Oh yes, there was this exhibition of medieval Mexican art we had at the Tate. There was a big sort of idol thing holding a kind of plate out in front of it, on which sacrifices were supposed to have been made. Every evening, after the doors were closed, we'd find it full of coppers and sixpences."
>
> "I suppose you couldn't say how much the money amounted to?"
>
> "No, I'm afraid nobody was counting it."

Later I interviewed one of the senior executives. "What kind of piece are you writing?" he asked. "A kind of general interest piece," I told him. "Not too long-haired." Involuntarily his hand strayed to his forehead and pushed away a hank which had fallen over his eyes. We stared at each other in mutual embarrassment.

IF THE fiction pages failed to match the features for discipline and deep research, they still preserved the same façade of thrills, adventure, laughs, boy-meets-girl, and beyond it the comfortable assumption that the world was a pretty comfortable place to be born in.

In every short story, moral right trampled on moral wrong—although this often seemed alarmingly unlikely until the last couple of paragraphs. The old standards—courage, loyalty, patriotism—were always proof against any brand of evil. The policeman always won.

There were also other essentials. The fiction had to be "wholesome." No hunchbacks or

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other deformed persons were allowed to appear. A pretty girl among the characters was obligatory, if for no other purpose than to bring glamour to the illustration. A strong plot with a surprise dénouement at the end, was considered a matter of course. No ending was permitted to be "downbeat;" stories were expected to finish on a note of optimism, of rosy promise for the future, of a good and necessary (even if dangerous and unpleasant) job done.*

Sex went as far as the chaste kiss, and no further—it was a cardinal principle that the magazine could be left about in the home for any of the children to pick up. But it was also part of the editorial policy to publish "big names." Since many of the "big names" owed much of their fame to the violation of the "chastity" principle there was sometimes a clash of interests; but this could always be resolved by ruthless doctoring. Probably one of the greatest feats of literary emasculation in history was the serialisation of *The Tribe that Lost Its Head*, by Nicholas Monserrat. This novel, a crude welter of lust, perversion, and rape, set against an African colonial background, was picked clean by the *John Bull* fiction department of all the qualities which had made it a best-seller in the bookshops, and presented to the public as a feeble—if faintly risqué—story of tribal revolt.

In 1955 commercial television made its appearance, commenced to make huge profits and, as was forecast, began to drain away a lot of the advertising revenues from newspapers and magazines. The general magazines were hardest hit, as the advertisers began to be particularly choosy about where they placed the commissions which were not already leering, gibbering, and smugly exhorting from the screens in countless council houses. Generally they concentrated this residue on the specialised markets—the glossy weeklies with snob appeal, the trade papers, the women's magazines—which soon recovered from the slump.

Like all its contemporaries *John Bull* was produced at a loss; all the profits came from advertising revenues. Thus the size of the magazine and the amount of editorial space, depended each week on the volume of advertising. Around 1954–55 the issues sometimes ran to 72 pages. By 1958 they were fluctuating between 28 and 36. Paradoxically, the extinction of rivals—*Picture Post, Illustrated, Everybody's*—merely increased the advertisement famine. As the specific general magazine market began to crumble, the advertisers concentrated on other groups of publications which were still flourishing.

Early in 1958 the sales of *John Bull* fell below the million for the first time since the war. Not long afterwards an accountant, mulling over the economics of the magazine, discovered that the extra cost of printing some headlines in red type coincided almost exactly with the weekly losses. The red type was discontinued. But soon *John Bull* had drifted once more into the red. An appeal was circulated for "economy in the use of paper;" the sure sign of an ailing magazine.

At first, the reaction to this economic adversity was to "sit through it—and wait for the sun to shine." Then, when the depression showed no sign of breaking up, came a sudden urgent awakening. The first casualty was the job piece. It was replaced towards the end of 1957 by the ghosted article.

It's Cost You £10,000 to Keep Me in Prison.

We Bought Ourselves a Stately Home.

The theory behind the ghosted piece is that certain people might have a good story to tell, or important views to communicate. Since they are incapable of setting them down in the highly professional form demanded by the mass circulation organs, the trained writers perform this service for them behind the scenes.† In order to retain the "personal impact," the articles are written in the first person and appear under the name of the principal character.

Within a few months of the new policy being

* The formula for short stories finally became so tight that nearly all of them were provided by a small group of professional writers, who had learned to turn them out to order. The result was that the limits tended to become still narrower, and the stories published began to show an increasing similarity to one another. Eventually it was thought necessary to publish at least one story a month which was outside the formula. This led to occasional appearances by authors such as Frank O'Connor.

† Not surprisingly, this apparently innocent deception of the public is subject to abuse, particularly when the original idea for an article, the material itself, and the writing skill are all supplied by the journalist, writing under the name of some well-known "personality." The writer may even adapt his style to fit the personal characteristics of that personality, who will have contributed virtually nothing to the article except his name, and is probably paid more for that contribution than the journalist. But perhaps the unwholesome peak of ghosting has already been reached on the sports pages of popular newspapers.

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approved, I became a rescuer of trapped animals, an auctioneer, the proprietor of a golf club, and a professional beauty queen. This last metamorphosis gave rise to some confusion. When I presented the article for editorial inspection it was ruled that the language in which it was couched was a little too neat and refined; it was "too intelligent" for a beauty queen.

"But she's quite an intelligent girl."

"Yes, maybe she is, but we've got to make her fit the reader's *conception* of a beauty queen."

I re-wrote the piece in mid-Atlantic cockney. It was passed. I took it to the "author" to have it approved. Across the coffee-table—we were in a chi-chi espresso in West Kensington—she raised her big, beautiful, lilac-blue eyes from the manuscript. They were vaguely troubled.

"It's a little bit rough in places. A girl would never say some of the things you've written here. . . ."

There was a further hazard to this ghosting business. It seemed to arouse all the latent writing instincts in the "authors." Confronted with the finished, highly-polished article, they would seldom be able to resist an attempt to stamp it with their own literary style; a tendency which had to be firmly resisted before it led to disaster.

To cope with the diminishing editorial space a new, shorter type of article was devised—the *one-pager*, stuffed with details about things like hiccoughs, cocktails, hats, and high winds. Another type of profile was introduced in which the writer "called on" the subject, questioned him aggressively, and presented his own account of the ensuing conversation. A humorous column, composed of amusing tit-bits of verse and scraps of dialogue, was added. (Both had flourished for years in the American *Saturday Evening Post*.)

Slowly the old façade began to crumble—*Illustrated* and *Everybody's* fell below the half-million, and disappeared. The *John Bull* readership still hovered around the million mark, but advertising was down to a few pages and the magazine was losing substantially. Most of the national newspapers were riding the famine by running advertising features disguised as editorial matter. *John Bull* did not descend to this resort. The magazine also resisted the traditional British custom of checking a falling circulation by "cheesecaking" it up—that is, appealing to lower tastes with sensationalism, sex, "confessions," and violence.

It relaxed on royalty. For years, *John Bull* had scarcely mentioned the Royal Family except on royal occasions, principally because of the poverty of the material available. Owing to the stuffy and pompous traditions which still cling to the British Crown, allied to the understandable desire of royalty to live a life of its own, very little official information of any interest or significance is ever allowed to percolate through the gates of Buckingham Palace. As a result, royal article writers (there are some who make it a profession) have to stretch their material beyond breaking point in an effort to say something new. The usual "royalty" article offered to *John Bull* would normally amount to fifty per cent old facts and anecdotes sewn together with trivial bits of gossip, and fifty per cent "flam" (journalistic padding). Any new material which had crept in always looked suspiciously apocryphal. This combination was the direct antithesis of the traditional *John Bull* devotion to accuracy.

From 1956–58 I cannot recall a single article on royalty in the magazine. By 1959 they had become a commonplace feature.

Is this the Turning Point for Princess Margaret?

How Prince Philip is Changing the Royal Family.

What Prince Charles will be like when he Grows Up.

The Royal Family did not seem to attract any new readers.

IN OCTOBER, 1959, *John Bull* bought the "*second* British rights" on a major series, the *Memoirs of Field Marshal Montgomery*—for the first time in its history.

The circulation at this time was a little above 900,000. Advertising prospects had improved; the figures at the end of the year showed a sixty per cent increase. But by this time the decision to bury the magazine had already been taken.

John Bull was laid to rest in February, 1960. From a robust, ale-swilling, table-thumping yeoman he had become a pale insurance clerk, engrossed in his telly when he was not worrying about the payments on his Austin Seven; but otherwise smug, domestic, conformist, other-directed.

In the last few weeks the circulation rallied a little.

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THEATRE

Music and Meaning

By Nigel Dennis

OF ALL forms of perversity, none is more satisfying than answering questions; and when the answer is to an unanswerable question, there is no limit to satisfaction. So it was a great joy to find in *The Times* last month a completely satisfying answer to a question that had always seemed unanswerable: why don't actors speak better? The answer (supplied by an anonymous book-reviewer) read: "It is salutary just now to be reminded by Mr. Martin Holmes in *Shakespeare's Public* of the day when audience were still obliged to listen to the words to learn what the play was about."

The implications of this statement are so obvious and so satisfying that we shall not lose a moment in expanding them into the following absolutely water-tight theory:

Three hundred and fifty years ago, when our infant drama was mewling and puking in its verses' arms, the only way a London audience could find out what was happening in a Shakespeare play was by listening to the words. Mr. Burbage had been at pains, in rehearsals, to point out to the players that they must speak clearly, saying probably: "Now, listen to me, you unimaginative cretins! This isn't *Everyman*. It isn't even *Dr. Faustus*. It's something absolutely *new*—and if those hooligans in the front, or round and round if Hotson is right, can't hear what the plot's about, it's curtains for all of us." And so, in this beautiful dawn of our national theatre—so many, many years before Wycherley and Pinero and even Wesker and Pinter—actors spoke with precise and penetrating enunciation, making clear to the meanest potman which Norwegian embassy was about to enter, which battlement about to hoist a ghost, which rapier to regard as poisonous. This they did with such enormous success that before long everybody knew exactly what all the plays were about. Moreover, they had heard the lines so clearly that soon they were able to repeat them from memory—and what their memories lacked, the printing-presses soon made good. And this (still following *The Times* theory) was the beginning of the end of audibility. The new audiences knew the plays long before they saw them. They had heard and studied the words so well that these were, so to speak, no longer utterances that came from the stage but responses that rose from their own memories—mere "literature," in fact. Realising this, the producer now addressed his players in other terms, saying probably: "Now, listen all of you! People don't come to this theatre to hear your lovely glottal-work. They don't come to hear *anything*. They don't *want* to hear anything. Well, I've helped you by cutting out most of the text, so you help me by tobogganing over what's left. What's *exciting* about this production is that Mrs. Peacham is starring and *I'm* producing." And once this formula had been established, once it was taken for granted that provided good visibility, audibility could be nil, even the newest play was treated as incoherently as if Shakespeare himself had written it. Which is why, to-day, when the curtain rises on any play, old or new, the plot must be guessed by following the actors' faces and feet. The emphatic keenings, or forceful mutterings, that accompany their gambols are simply what we call a "vehicle"—a means of keeping the actors in synchronized motion, telling them when to enter or exit, what emotion to register, what expression to shape. It is purely a method of professional intercommunication on the stage itself and, as such, need not and should not reach the audience at all.

WE WERE so impressed at having worked out this water-tight reason for inaudibility that we got Mr. Holmes' book and read it thoroughly. What a shock to find that *The Times* reviewer had made the careless, but natural mistake of saying the opposite of what the book he was reviewing said! For, far from arguing that Shakespeare's audiences had been obliged to hear the words in order to understand the play, Mr. Holmes' whole point was that they came to the theatre *knowing far better than we do* what the new play was going to be about. Unlike ourselves they had read Hall, Holinshed, Plutarch, Boccaccio, Lodge, Kyd, and they were also closer in time to much of the material. "The modern reader or play-goer," says Mr. Holmes, "cannot but be hampered to some extent by unfamiliarity with the main historical facts, or

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rather with the version of them that the author and his audience took for granted." Thus, it is his opinion that many of Shakespeare's plays were, to his public, what the "film version of a novel" is to us, and that Shakespeare was always canny and businesslike enough to re-tell the stories with the sort of fidelity to the originals that a very popular novel imposes upon present-day Shakespeares like Mr. de Mille and the Warner Brothers. Indeed, by the time Mr. Holmes has finished examining each play and showing how shrewdly Shakespeare avoided being clever and original, we see clearly that the main difference between him and Mr. Sam Goldwyn is purely verbal. Shakespeare, lacking for better tools, required a command of words; but Goldwyn, working in a visual medium, could afford to be entirely illiterate. The modern producer, not understanding the reason for this difference, takes Goldwyn as his model instead of Shakespeare, and thus renders inaudible in the latter what is merely superfluous in the former. Attuned by now to forty-odd years of films, he spends his rehearsal hours drawing chalk marks on the floor and planning the moves of his hirelings as if all were under the governance of cameras. Sets and dresses are studied with fascinated absorption, as if the fanciful covering of human nudity were the first, rather than the last, requirement of the dramatic art. "Many people object, quite honestly," says Max Beerbohm, "that the pleasure of the ear is diminished by that of the eye—that spectacle is a foe to poetry." But this remark is now fifty years out of date. Spectacle has won so completely that poetry—indeed, words of any sort—has become a foe to the stage's cinematic illiteracy. The text that distinguished a play of Shakespeare's from its sources in Hall or Holinshed, is precisely what least distinguishes it to-day. Absorbed in film-fun, the actor is moved beyond words.

Having constructed a second water-tight theory simply by contradicting the first water-tight one, we proceeded to look for supporting evidence—always the last stage in the provision of final answers. If (we argued) the film had ruined the stage speech-wise, dramatic critics of the pre-film era would support our theory by praising the diction of pre-film actors. Max Beerbohm, for instance, *should* have found excellent diction on the English stage—and what's more, he *did*. One may read a whole volume of his dramatic criticisms without finding more than two complaints of inaudibility. One of these arose from his being seated in the back of the pit instead of the "comfortable stall" from which (he assures us) he was always able to "hear . . . quite distinctly."

The other occasion for complaint is a most interesting one: the Chorus "failed to give the grace of audibility" to an *avant-garde* production of *Samson Agonistes*. The producer, Mr. William Poel, had done everything that we, to-day, expect a go-ahead producer to do. He had hung Samson's prison-yard with purple curtains. Hs had dressed the Philistine Delilah in a hoop skirt and a Medici collar. He had put Greek tunics on all the Israelites. Moreover, he had arranged for the Chorus to make all their entrances and exits by way of the gangways, "very slowly, for fear of tripping," and seen to it that the giant Samson was played by an under-sized actor who had "no sense at all" either of Samson's psychology or Milton's meaning. This "absurd evening" occurred in December, 1908. Did it mark the beginning of the present end? Was it the moment when Medici collars and gangway entrances began to weigh so heavily upon producers that they were obliged to lighten the boat by throwing out the text? And finally, if stage diction in the pre-film era had seemed so admirable to Beerbohm, must it not have seemed even more admirable to his predecessor, Bernard Shaw?

THE answer is no—and a second water-tight theory gone down the drain. If the stage's communicative noises came over well enough to Beerbohm (a draughtsman at heart, perhaps), they usually provoked storms of rage in the author of *Pygmalion*. Indeed, so furious was Shaw over the badness of stage-diction that we almost began working out a third water-tight theory, which we intended to prove by citing current examples of inaudibility. We only found, to our theoretical indignation, that the London theatre, at this moment, provides, on the contrary, some of the finest possible examples of first-rate diction. One can, for instance, stand at the very back of the dress-circle and hear all Sir Laurence Olivier's concluding words on the rhinoceros problem. At *A Passage to India*, where the problem is more international but less universal, one may hear every single principal speaking with unvarying clarity and attention to verbal nuance. The same goes for Mr. Pinter's purely-personal problem at the Arts and reaches perfection, perhaps, at the Old Vic in *St. Joan*. Here, a long and complicated interpretation of the problem of human evil is delivered so impeccably that the very holes in the water-tight Shavian theory are opened to the prodding intellect—indeed, if Mr. John Moffatt, playing de Stogumber, had not slowly gathered the whole evening together and finally walked off with it, one could describe the production as a triumph of collective diction alone.

Can one find any plausible reason why the four plays listed above should arouse such

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eloquence? Is it accurate to suggest that their problematical natures have the effect of throwing all the weight of the players' attention on to the words? None of the four plays can move without resting at every step upon clear argument; thus, the producer who attempted to play up the eyeful at the expense of the mouthful would find at once that these plays stand independent of spectacle. They are also devoid of physical action—which is to say, the actors may stand still or sit down, and are not asked to run about tossing verbs over their shoulders (when Mr. Orson Welles *imposes* this sort of unnecessary movement upon the players in *Rhinoceros*, incoherence prevails immediately). In short, we have four plays in which the actors are tied hand and foot to their tongues. They cannot look to their legs, or their costumes, or their postures to carry them through; they must speak or die.

That this argument may be at least half true is suggested by the current Old Vic production of *Henry V*. Here are the same actors one has heard the previous evening in *St. Joan*—with the difference that they are no longer tackling an argumentative problem. They are preceded by a Chorus who roundly declares that a grand spectacle is about to be presented in a small compass and urges the audience's utmost co-operation in the illusion. But in *Henry V*, it would seem, only Chorus *must* feel in his bones (as Mr. John Stride undoubtedly does at the Old Vic) that he must speak like an angel if he is to have any part in the play at all. The rest of the cast have too much else to depend on—a dazzling array of multi-coloured costumes, scene after scene of strut, swagger, and affront, an incessant interplay of spectacular movement. The text is far more gorgeous than *St. Joan*, and both plays can be equally splendidly dressed. And yet, the same actor finds it natural to swashbuckle his text of Shakespeare the very night after he has given his Shaw a superb purity of diction. *Henry V* is no *problem—that*, perhaps, is the problem.

It was Shaw's opinion that the actor who studied Shakespeare's "meaning" was simply wasting his time: Shakespeare, said Shaw, never *had* a "meaning" that was worth one minute's attention: only his "music" must be studied and conveyed. And yet, even the most ordinary "meaning" needs to be understood before its "music" can be delivered with a proper inflection—as witness the "meaning" of *St. Joan*, which may have seemed difficult when it was written but is by now as ordinary as the "meaning" of *Henry V* and no less romantic. The actor who, as King of France, is handed the lines:

> *Up, princes! and, with spirit of honour edg'd*
> *More sharper than your swords, hie to the field:*
> *Charles Delabreth, High Constable of France;*
> *You Dukes of Orleans, Bourbon, and Berri,*
> *Alençon, Brabant, Bar, and Burgundy;*
> *Jaques Chatillon, Rambures, Vaudemont,*
> *Beaumont, Grandpré, Roussi, and Fauconberg,*
> *Foix, Lestrale, Bouciqualt, and Charolois;*

must see at once that, unlike a list of vegetables, their "meaning" is one of high grandeur and collective power, and that if this "meaning" is not followed the "music" will play a wretched second fiddle to the coloured splendour of the sets and costumes out of which they are spoken. Moreover, vocal "mounting" requires the most-calculated subtlety. If, like Mr. Donald Houston, one bellows one's rugged heart out over tennis balls, what has one left in the register for assailing Harfleur? If the actor who plays the French herald, Montjoy, cannot see that only by means of a perfectly inflected voice can he suggest the "meaning" of his unique and delicate relationship with the English king, he will throw away one of the most brilliant little gems in Shakespeare's earrings. If (following an old tradition) the King of France is too wan to stand, let alone spout, or the Dauphin too decadent to know one end of a war-horse from the other... but Mr. John Moffatt played the Old Vic Dauphin and, with Chorus and Mr. Joss Ackland's snapping Pistol, showed that Shakespeare could be spoken as meaningfully as Shaw.

WE MOVE to-day in a disgusting atmosphere of filth, smuts, fumes, smog, and diesel, and stand amid all this in sodden shoes and mackintoshes waiting patiently for belching engines that never come. But when we light a cigarette to alleviate our misery, we are warned that the Great Cancer Statistician feels obliged to set another black mark against our own organs of internal combustion: pleasure is always the first suspect in a fatal matter. Similarly, when audibility begins to wheeze it is human to decide that this is the result of the lascivious pleasure people take in colours and costumes, and demand that in future the eye be deprived utterly of all spectacles in order that the ear may get a look in. But so many watertight theories have gone down under us in the course of writing this that it hardly seems safe to insist that all actors be stripped henceforth to their underwear and the stage to twelve planks and four beer-barrels. All we can say firmly in the end is that the human voice is as colourful and brilliant as any set or costume, and that the more splendid the visual colours, the more the voices must be a match for them. The stage presents many sad sights, but none sadder than a figure that stalks in purple and ermine and talks in grunts and shrieks.

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POETRY

The Two Deaths of Vladimir Mayakovsky

By Patricia Blake

EARLY in the morning of April 14th, 1930, the Russian poet Semyon Kirsanov telephoned Vladimir Mayakovsky and asked him for the name of his tailor in Moscow. Mayakovsky, who was something of a dandy, invited Kirsanov to join him at the tailor's the following day.

Now that morning had begun as many others in Mayakovsky's life. He had made a date with one of his literary friends; some lines of a poem he had been playing with for months had at last come clear in his mind; and he was again contemplating the act which had obsessed him all his life. In observance of the Russian superstition that before death a man must put on clean linen, he changed his shirt. On his desk he placed a letter he had prepared two days before. But still he was undecided. He put a single cartridge in the cylinder of his revolver; twice before he had played Russian roulette with himself and won. That day, at 10.15, he lost his life in the game. The final version of the verses he left behind reads:

And, as they say, the incident is closed.
Love's boat has smashed against the daily grind.
Now life and I are quits. Why bother then
to balance mutual sorrows, pains, and hurts.

His friend, Boris Pasternak, has described the hours that followed.

> Between eleven and twelve the ripples were still circling around the shot. The news rocked the telephones, blanketed faces with pallor, and directed one to the Lubyansky Passage, through the yard and into the house, where already people from the town and the tenants were packed all the way up the staircase. They wept and pressed against each other, pitched there and splashed on the walls by the flattening force of events. . . . On the threshold Aseyev was crying. . . . In the depths of the room by the window, his head drawn into shoulders, Kirsanov stood, shaken by noiseless sobs. . . . A lump rose in my throat. I decided to cross over to his room again, this time to cry my fill. . . . He lay on his side with his face to the wall, sullen and imposing, with a sheet up to his chin, his mouth half open as in sleep. Haughtily turning his back on all, even in this repose, even in this sleep, he was stubbornly straining to go away somewhere. His face took one back to the days when he had called himself "handsome, twentytwoyearold," for here death had arrested an attitude which it almost never succeeds in capturing. This was an expression with which one begins life but does not end it. He was sulking and indignant. (*Safe Conduct*, 1931.)

For Pasternak and the other young writers of Russia's splendidly creative 'twenties, Mayakovsky's death, at the age of thirty-six, was cause for desolation and foreboding. His suicide was one of those rare acts of definition in history which strips clean a whole era and mercilessly lays open the future. The poet who had tried to place his supremely individual gifts at the service of a collective society now lay with a bullet through his heart—"love's boat smashed against the daily grind." While he lived his voice had roused the talent of an entire generation of Russian poets. After his death his colleagues were soon silenced or forced to yield their originality to the demands of socialist realism—when they were not obliterated altogether by the purges of the 'thirties.

NOWADAYS the sense of Mayakovsky's suicide has been muddled by crude interpretation. Communist writers dismiss it as an outrageous, an improper, or, at best, an inexplicable accident. Abroad, the view is favoured that he was driven to death by Party hacks who are said to have persecuted him in the late 'twenties. Romantics suggest that he killed himself over a woman, while realists maintain that he succumbed to a grave mental illness.

The truth, however, lies not so much in the conditions of his death as in the circumstances of his life. Mayakovsky, the poet laureate of

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the Soviet state, was, in effect, the most alienated figure in Russian literature. Not even Gogol, not even Dostoievsky, had known the singular desolation of Mayakovsky. At twenty-two, he had already found its definition: *"But where can a man/like me/bury his head?/Where is there shelter for me?/. . . The gold of all the Californias/will never satisfy the rapacious horde of my lusts./. . . I shall go by,/dragging my burden of love./In what delirious/and ailing, night,/was I sired by Goliaths/I, so large,/so unwanted?"*[1]

Much of Mayakovsky's life was squandered in the search for some refuge from the pain that hounded him. He sought it in the absolutes of his time: the Bolshevik revolution and the theology of Communism—and, these ultimately failing him, in death. During his life, he was engaged in a performance which he described in these terms: *"I shall plunge headlong from the scaffolding of days./Over the abyss I've stretched my soul in a tightrope/and, juggling with words, totter above it."*[2] Mass audiences were required for all the parts he assumed in this performance: revolutionist, propagandist, cartoonist, journalist, actor, screenwriter and, often enough, poet. For fifteen years the most excruciatingly personal of poets travelled from city to city across Russia giving lectures and declaiming his verses.

His work reflects this prodigality. He produced some of the most splendid lyrics in Russian poetry and, in the same breath, some of the silliest doggerel in Soviet propaganda history. He wasted his talent drawing posters and composing thousands of slogans and "agitational" jingles which urged the Soviet people to drink boiled water, put their money in the bank, and patronise state stores. The author of *The Bedbug* and *The Bath-house*, two brilliant dramatic satires on the philistinism and bureaucratic idiocies of Soviet society, was also capable of writing, without irony, *"I want/a commissar/with a decree/to lean over the thought of the age/. . . I want/the factory committee/to lock/my lips/when the work is done."*[3]

As Mayakovsky was all things to himself so he was to his readers. Lenin had no use for him. Stalin declared he was the most talented poet of the Soviet epoch. Pasternak, who can hardly be said to share Stalin's taste, called him the foremost poet of his generation. Another distinguished Nobel Prize winner, Ivan Bunin, dismissed him as a versifying hooligan. These contradictions have endured. To-day his chauvinistic *My Soviet Passport* and elegiac *Vladimir Ilich Lenin* are taught in all Soviet schools. At the same time he is the idol of the young poets and writers who are straining against the orthodoxy of socialist realism; thirty years after his death, such poems as *I* and *The Cloud in Trousers* are considered by them as models of unorthodoxy in Soviet literature.

Everybody is right about Mayakovsky. Of the thirteen volumes of his complete works, about one-third consists of fulminations on patriotic and political themes. Another third is composed of serious "revolutionary" poems which are quite original in their *genre* and which still to-day can evoke some of the fervour of the early years of the Bolshevik revolution. What remains are his satiric plays, and his lyrics on the themes which were central to Mayakovsky's life: a man's longing for love and his suffering at the hands of the loveless; his passion for life and his desolation in a hostile and inhuman world; his yearning for the absolutes of human experience and his rage at his impotent self.

Until now, only odds and ends were known of the circumstances which produced this wild man of Russian letters. (Mayakovsky's memory, a friend once remarked, was like the road to Poltava—everyone left his galoshes along it.) His canonization during the Stalin era prevented any serious biographical research. To-day, however, it is possible to reconstruct the episodes in Mayakovsky's life which are relevant to his personal tragedy, on the basis of information which has become accessible since Stalin. Many of Mayakovsky's surviving friends and colleagues have felt free to reminisce about him with Western visitors like myself. And an ill-fated volume, *New Light on Mayakovsky*,[4] published in Moscow in 1958, has provided many pre-

[1] *To His Beloved Self, the Author Dedicates these Lines* (1916).
[2] *The Backbone Flute* (1915).
[3] *Back Home!* (1925).
[4] The book has since been withdrawn from sale and its editors accused of "defamation" in the Soviet press.

Past One o'Clock

Past one o'clock. You must have gone to bed.
The Milky Way streams silver through the night.
I'm in no hurry: with lightning telegrams
I have no cause to wake or trouble you.
And, as they say, the incident is closed.
Love's boat has smashed against the daily grind.
Now you and I are quits. Why bother then
to balance mutual sorrows, pains, and hurts.
Behold what quiet settles on the world.
Night wraps the sky in tribute from the stars.
In hours like these, one rises to address
the ages, history, and all creation.

VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY
(1930) *translated by George Reavey*

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viously unpublished Mayakovsky letters and biographical materials.

"MAYAKOVSKY? A born beatnik!" This observation was made to me in Moscow by an elderly intellectual who had somehow availed himself of the work of Kerouac and Ginsberg. "I remember him all too well," he continued. "Before the revolution, when he was just a boy, and fresh out of jail, he loved to break up concerts, poetry readings, and picture exhibitions. Wearing his futurist get-up—a yellow smock and a sunflower painted on his forehead—he'd stamp his feet and howl abuse at Gorky, Blok, Bely, and any other important person who happened to be there. Our so-called greatest poet of the revolution was then, and remained till the end—a hooligan."

Unjust as this dictum may be, the young Mayakovsky certainly gave every appearance of delinquency. By his own account, he was an intractable child and a trouble-making adolescent. More significantly, his laconic autobiography and some of his poems suggest that Mayakovsky's great themes—the loneliness and lovelessness of man—were established long before manhood. In the poem, *I Love*, he recalled: *"I was gifted in measure with love./Since childhood, people/ have been drilled to labour./But I fled to the banks of the Rion/and knocked about there,/ doing absolutely nothing./Mama chided me angrily:/'Good for nothing!'/Papa threatened to belt me."* A motif of Mayakovsky's verse is an anguished appeal to his mother: *"Mama!/Your son is gloriously ill!/Mamma!/His heart is on fire./Tell his sisters, Lyuda and Olya,/he has no place to hide in."*[5] The father frequently offers a terrifying image: *"Sun! Father mine!/ If at least* THOU *wouldst have mercy and stop tormenting me!/For my blood Thou spilled gushes down this nether road."*[6]

Mayakovsky evidently found little to sustain him in the world of his childhood. He felt confined by Bagdadi (now re-named Mayakovsky), the Georgian village where he was born in 1893. The splendours of the Caucasus which had so moved Pushkin and Lermontov only bored Mayakovsky. When he was seven, his father, an impoverished Russian nobleman reduced to the job of forest ranger, began to take the boy with him on his rounds. During one such excursion, Mayakovsky glimpsed a rivet factory stunningly illuminated in the night. "After seeing electricity," he wrote in his autobiography, "I lost interest in nature. Not up-to-date enough."

His studies interested him even less; several schools expelled him. But in 1905, he found a splendid remedy for boredom: revolution. At the age of twelve he was stealing his father's sawed-off shotguns and delivering them to the local Social Democratic Committee. At fifteen, when he had moved to Moscow, he joined the Bolshevik faction and carried out underground propaganda until his arrest. He spent eleven months in prison, writing his first verses and reading, or, as he put it, "disposing of" contemporary authors. After his release he was determined to drop politics in favour of the arts, and, characteristically, fastened upon futurism, the most extravagant of the avant-garde movements active in Russia. Soon he was proclaiming even more vociferously than his colleagues that Pushkin, Dostoievsky, and Tolstoy must be "thrown overboard from the steamer of modernity."

As it happened, Mayakovsky burst on to the Moscow literary scene at the precise moment in history when Moscow was readiest for Mayakovsky. The capital was seized with the frenzy of modernism; many writers, painters, musicians, and theatre directors had caught up with the Western avant-garde, and already such people as Pasternak, Malevich, Kandinsky, Chagall, Prokofiev, and Meyerhold threatened to surpass their European colleagues with the brilliance and originality of their experiments. Talented young people, who had thronged to the capital from the provinces, had formed dozens of competing modernist groups, and met nightly to debate their manifestos for a revolution in the arts.

BUT revolution, as seen by these intellectuals and artists, had little in common with the vision held by Lenin, then waiting expectantly in exile. Their rebellion was directed largely against the suffocating conservatism and authoritarianism of imperial Russia. Moreover, these feverish young intellectuals were stricken, as all Russia was stricken, by a sense of the impending cataclysm. Alexander Blok described the mood:

> I think that there lay upon the hearts of the people of the last few generations a constant and wanton feeling of catastrophe, which was evoked by an impressive accumulation of indisputable facts, some of which have already passed into history and others are still awaiting accomplishment . . . in us all is a feeling of sickness, of alarm, of catastrophe, of disruption.

No wonder then that Mayakovsky soon became a commanding figure on the Russian literary scene. Who else but Mayakovsky could so convincingly exploit a feeling of sickness, alarm, catastrophe, and disruption? The coincidence of his talent and temperament with the dynamics of the period was absolute; no other

[5] *The Cloud in Trousers* (1915).
[6] *I* (1913).

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writer so perfectly embodied the fearful tensions of the last decade of the empire.

On the eve of revolution, Mayakovsky was already predicting his own end: *"The heart yearns for a bullet/while the throat raves of a razor,"* he wrote in *Man* (1916–17). *"The soul shivers;/she's caught in ice/and there's no escape for her!"* In his more sanguine moments he could often be found in some public hall or theatre, wearing a top hat, a large wooden spoon in his lapel as a boutonnière, and carrying a gold-topped cane, reciting his verses through a megaphone: *"No grey hairs streak my soul,/ no grandfatherly fondness there!/I shake the world with the might of my voice,/and walk-handsome,- twentytwo-yearold."*[7]

Moscow, at least, was shaken by Mayakovsky. He was a formidable spectacle. Over six feet tall and built like a boxer, he towered over everyone like a storm cloud. A scruffy shock of dark hair tumbled over his deeply-lined forehead. His thick lower lip curved towards the left, insolently, in conversation. In manner, he appeared alternately morose and exuberant, taciturn and witty, cruel and supremely gentle. But whatever his posture, his genius was unmistakeable—a goad to some and an insult to others. The young iconoclasts of Moscow were spell-bound by him, respectable people were scandalised, while women of every sort found him irresistible.

More importantly, Mayakovsky represented an affront to the values and sensibilities of the liberal intelligentsia. For all those who cared for the sweet and solemn diction of Russian verse, Mayakovsky sounded a monstrous clangour. His thumping rhythms, his declamatory style, his use of puns, neologisms, and *outré* images shattered every standard of verbal behaviour. And, for all those who cherished the Russian intelligentsia's humanistic traditions, there was something horrifying about Mayakovsky's self-absorption—his craving for melodrama, his penchant for high tragedy, and his fascination with the drum-beat of revolution.

In effect, he appeared as a traitor to the old intelligentsia, and, even worse, as the symbol of the ultimate failure of its mission. Since Pushkin, the writer and especially the poet had acted as the conscience of autocratic Russia and as the spokesman for the aspirations of the great mass of illiterate Russian people. It was the liberal intelligentsia which had first given the people a national consciousness, brought the ideas of Europe's Enlightenment to backward Russia, and, like Pushkin, "celebrated freedom in this cruel age." But, as revolution neared, the intelligentsia was losing contact with the people, now roused to the brink of violence. "We see ourselves . . . flying in a lighty rickety aeroplane, high above the earth," wrote Blok in 1908. "But beneath us is a rumbling and fire-splitting mountain and down its sides, behind clouds of ashes, roll streams of red-hot lava." It was left to Mayakovsky to be the poet of this eruption.

Although ultimately correct, this judgment of Mayakovsky was premature before October, 1917. True, his harsh and violent idiom was far closer to the mood of elemental Russia than the elegant language of the "gentlemen poets" who warbled (in Mayakovsky's phrase) of "pages, palaces, love, and lilac blooms." Yet in his early poetry he was almost entirely absorbed by his personal torments. Then, it was Pasternak, of all the writers bound to the humanistic tradition, who understood Mayakovsky best. Pasternak was later to reject his political verse, but in Mayakovsky's early lyrics he saw "poetry moulded by a master; proud and daemonic and at the same time infinitely doomed, at the point of death, almost an appeal for help"[8]

Indeed, from these lyrics rises a single cry of pain, at times barely tolerable to the human ear. His poetic techniques served above all to sharpen the impact of his feelings on the senses

[7] *The Cloud in Trousers* (1915).

[8] *An Essay in Autobiography* (Collins and Harvill Press, London, 1959).

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of the reader—or rather, of the listener—for his verses were written to be read aloud. Poetry was his confessional, his lectern, and his soap-box. Here he always assumed the first person, the "I" with which he could directly assail his audience with every detail of his personal affairs, and every nuance of his feelings.

IN HIS most important work before 1917, *The Cloud in Trousers*, he begins with an attack on the sentimental drawing-room poets who cannot turn themselves inside out; then he proceeds to do just that. Rejected by his beloved, he eviscerates first himself, and, ultimately, the universe. His screams claw his mouth apart, a nerve leaps within him like a sick man from his bed. He will root up his soul, and, trampling it to a bloody rag, offer it to his beloved as a banner. *"Look!"* he cries, *"again they've beheaded the stars/and the sky is bloodied with carnage."* Here, in these images of terror and violence, is Mayakovsky at his best and worst. Most often he is the master of his material, but sometimes he loses control and staggers out of the bounds of art into the realm of psychopathology. Then the poet's anguish appears unnecessary, excessive, artificial. It is at such moments that Mayakovsky's great weakness is most apparent. This weakness lay not in the overabundance of passion, but, all too often, in the absence of it. Clearly, he felt a deadness in himself which demanded quickening. Hence, he was constantly exacerbating his feelings; only when he had thus roused himself to an extremity of emotion did he feel wholly alive. All the extravagances of this astonishing man's life—his dramatic involvements with women, his intoxication with Bolshevism, and, paradoxically, even his obsession with suicide—must be understood in this sense.

Mayakovsky's misfortunes in love, which constitute the main topic of his lyrical poetry, were either invented or invited. Most women adored him; he was handsome, he was famous, and he had the ineluctable charm of a *poète maudit* in the rough. And, according to Mayakovsky, he adored them equally. As an adolescent, he loved to boast of his successes: "the greatest pleasure is to wait in clean bedclothes for the arrival of the female species." Yet in reality, he quickly abandoned women who loved him simply or easily. In love, as in all things, Mayakovsky favoured the impossible. He always chose women who were unavailable to him for some reason or other. He had two important loves in his life, both unrealised, both doomed from the start.

The first of these loves was Lily Brik—the famous Lily, whose coldness and inconstancy Mayakovsky lamented in public for fifteen years. Lily, the handsome and cultivated daughter of a Moscow lawyer, was the wife of Osip Brik, the critic and editor. Their home was a kind of permanent literary salon where for many years Lily collected famous men from the avant-garde, much as she added to her wardrobe of splendid dresses from the Paris couturiers. Mayakovsky first met this captivating creature in July, 1915—"a most joyful date," he noted in his autobiography. A few months later he dedicated to Lily what is surely the most savage indictment of a woman and womanhood to be formulated in our time: *The Backbone Flute*. From Lily's bed rises the smell of scorching wool—the devil's flesh rising in sulphurous flames. Lily's lips are a monastery hacked from frigid rock. Lily's eyes excavate the hollows of two graves in her face. And why? Lily, the terrible, the accursed Lily, has left Mayakovsky for another man. He is condemned to the Siberia of the heart where, he writes, *"I'll scratch Lily's name on my fetters,/ and in the darkness of hard labour, kiss them again and again."*

The Backbone Flute is merely a premonition. Lily and he were not even lovers in 1915. Not until after the Revolution did Lily, her complaisant husband, and Mayakovsky begin living as a *ménage à trois*, and not until 1923 did Lily abandon him for another man. Yet he was always a step ahead of tragedy; his lyrics were composed in apprehension of it. In *The Backbone Flute* he suggests that it would be better for him to punctuate his end with a bullet. In *Man*, he writes that his "handcuffs rattle" as he foresees the millennium of love when all will perish, God will burn out the last rays of the sun, and only Mayakovsky's pain will survive and be intensified. He concludes: *"And I stand/ wrapped in flames/at the imperishable stake/of my inconceivable love."*

The stake, fetters, handcuffs—these images indicate the nature of Mayakovsky's bond with Lily Brik. It consisted largely of mutually imposed indignities. The poems he wrote in her name, and recited with her permission all over the country, were nearly always abusive. After her infidelity and the end of their love-affair, he continued to share an apartment with the Briks —a stormy arrangement which lasted until his death. During his travels and hers, he bombarded her with letters and telegrams, addressed to *"Kitten"* and signed *"Puppy,"* which begged for some scrap of affection. The fact that he continued to send these communications long after he was involved with other women suggests that he had invented her to serve his masochism. She herself was aware of her insubstantial rôle. To his last plaintive messages cabled to her a month before his death, she

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replied: "I have received your little telegram . . . but I do not understand to whom you are writing . . . certainly not to me. . . . Please invent a new text for telegrams."

TOUGH, vain, and basically insensible, Lily was well insulated against Mayakovsky, but frailer souls often suffered because of him. People with suicidal inclinations were particularly vulnerable. Mayakovsky once broke with a seventeen-year-old girl who was desperately in love with him. A few years later, she killed herself—an event which he chose to commemorate by writing a movie scenario containing a sequence which satirised it. The most famous of Mayakovsky's cruelties, however, concerned Sergei Esenin. Always a critic of the great and dissolute neo-romantic poet, Mayakovsky was enraged when Esenin committed suicide in 1925. Ravaged by heavy drinking and drugs, and disillusioned by the sovietisation of Russia, Esenin had cut his wrists, written a farewell poem in his own blood, then hanged himself. Two lines of this poem read:

> *. . . in this life to die is nothing new,*
> *but, of course, to live is not much newer.*

Mayakovsky promptly composed a poem entitled *To Sergei Esenin* in which he countered:

> *. . . in this life it is not hard to die,*
> *to mould life is more difficult."*

Mayakovsky compounded the injury to Esenin's memory when, a year later, he lectured on his purpose in writing *To Sergei Esenin*:

> My aim: to deliberately paralyse the action of Esenin's last lines; to make Esenin's end uninteresting; to set forth, in place of the easy beauty of death, another kind of beauty. For the working class needs strength in order to continue the Revolution which demands . . . that we glorify life and the joy that is to be found along that most difficult of roads—the road towards Communism.

Not until Mayakovsky's own suicide four years later could this outrageous utterance be wholly understood. He had, of course, been speaking of his own dilemma. In these crude terms he had defined the alternative which was always present in his mind: the easy beauty of death or the difficult road to Communism. The October Revolution had promised him a way out of the miasma of his personal life. The *poète maudit* who had indulged in all that was morbid in his temperament might now aspire to a higher order of things: the splendid-sounding ideals of Communism. Besides, as his adolescent experiences had proved, revolution was a tonic for the boredom that plagued him.

NO WONDER, then, that October, 1917, found Mayakovsky issuing "orders" to the "army of art:" *"Comrades, to the barricades! . . . Streets are our brushes/squares our palettes!"* During the first years of the revolution while hundreds of intellectuals were fleeing abroad from the terror, and all Russia was suffering the agony of civil war, famine, and epidemic, Mayakovsky was exultant. At this juncture, it seemed that the liberal intelligentsia had been right about Mayakovsky. Bunin spoke for many of those who were now in geographical or spiritual exile from Soviet Russia when he wrote that Mayakovsky was revelling in luxury and fame while the Russian people fed on corpses, and that he had abandoned the scandalous behaviour of a futurist for the scandalous behaviour of a "revolutionary demagogue, a fiery bard of Communism and Red terror who exhorted Russian youth to 'build their lives on the Dzerzhinsky pattern.'" True enough, Mayakovsky was unmoved by the inhumanity of the early years of the revolution. The savagery of the terror that had driven even Maxim Gorky to a physical breakdown compounded of grief and horror, left Mayakovsky enraptured, like a man who has had a vision of the second coming of Christ. The metaphor is his own. In *The Cloud in Trousers* he had prophesied the revolution in these terms, underestimating the date by only a year: *"I perceive whom no one sees,/crossing the mountains of time./Where men's eyes stop short,/there, at the head of hungry hordes,/the year 1916 cometh/in the thorny crown of revolutions."*

As it turned out, however, Mayakovsky fell far short of becoming a New Soviet Man. The dictatorship he had greeted so devoutly soon began to grate on his sensibilities. He felt increasingly oppressed by the Soviet bureaucracy and exasperated by its smugness and philistinism. After the terror and the civil war, Mayakovsky's attitude towards the authorities alternated between submission and independence. On the one hand he styled himself as a "loud-mouthed rabble-rouser" who served the state with masses of propaganda posters, jingles, and long-winded exhortations in verse, and on the other, he was determined to be the *enfant terrible* of Soviet literature whose mission was to save the state from surrendering to the pharisees and the philistines.

Until 1928 at least, he was free to behave pretty much as he willed. From the end of the civil war until Stalin began dictating cultural life, the artist had considerable independence, and although some of the cream of the intelligentsia

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had been lost to Russia in emigration, many outstanding people had remained to pursue the artistic experiments begun before the Revolution. The great experimental theatre of Vsevolod Meyerhold flourished in the twenties, while Bely, Zoshchenko, Zamyatin, Babel, and Pasternak were doing some of their best work. Writers travelled back and forth to London, Paris, Berlin, and Prague, publishing books there and bringing back quantities of Western literature for translation into Russian.

In this liberal atmosphere, Mayakovsky usually managed to retain his originality, even in his crudest polemics and his broadest satires. In his poem, *About Conferences* (1922), he observes that at daybreak office workers disappear into conferences of the "A-B-C-D-E-F-G Committees" "re the purchase of a bottle of ink by the provincial co-op." Annoyed at not finding anyone at his desk by nightfall, Mayakovsky bursts into one such conference and finds that only torsos are in attendance. Lower parts are conferring elsewhere. A clerk informs him that workers have had to split themselves up to meet organisational needs. Mayakovsky's final plea: "Oh, for just one more conference re the eradication of all conferences!"

His impudence to Soviet authorities was famous in Moscow. Roman Grynberg, a friend of Mayakovsky's in the early 'twenties, gives an arresting example. In 1922, immediately after a meeting with Trotsky, then People's Commissar for War, the poet rushed to his friend to brag about the "historic pun" he had just made at Trotsky's expense. Trotsky had summoned him to his office to interview him on the subject of modern Russian poetry for the book he was then writing, *Literature and Revolution*. Mayakovsky described the work of his colleagues, then Trotsky repeated his account after him, in his own words. "How was that as a first try? Did I understand you correctly?" asked Trotsky. Mayakovsky answered with a devastating pun: "The first pancake falls like a People's Commissar" (*pervy blin lyog narkomom*), a play on the saying "the first pancake falls like a lump" (*pervy blin lyog komom*).

Although propaganda and satire had become Mayakovsky's main preoccupations after the revolution, he did not by any means abandon lyrical poetry. Only now he was ashamed of his lyrics. "Unfortunately I have again a craving to write lyric verse," he wrote Lily Brik in 1924, after having completed a 3,000-line elegy on the death of Lenin. Clearly, he was trying to contain the personal agonies which constantly threatened to spill out into his poetry. His friend, Roman Jakobson, has called this exercise "personal censorship." At an exhibition of his posters and writings which opened three weeks before his death, Mayakovsky pontificated:

> Why should I write on Mary's love for Peter instead of considering myself part of that state organ which builds life. The basic goal of the exhibition is . . . to show that the poet is not one who, like a woolly lamb, bleats of lyric-erotic themes, but one who, in our acute class struggle, surrenders his pen to the arsenal of proletarian arms.

Nevertheless, Vladimir's love for Lily, and others, had resulted in some remarkable lyrics, among them: *I Love* (1922), an anguished declaration of love for Lily; *About This* (1923), his cry of despair at Lily's infidelity; *Letter from Paris to Comrade Kostrov on the Nature of Love* (1928), a direct expression of the rival claims of love and Communism on the poet.

The struggle within Mayakovsky between the propagandist and the lyric poet sharpened in the mid-'twenties. For one thing, his position as the foremost revolutionary poet was being questioned. Writers who considered themselves ideologically orthodox had begun to carp at him for his experimentalism and his independence. LEF (Left Front of Literature), the movement he had helped found along with other futurists, was also under fire. LEF's programme, like futurism's, was to create bold new forms in the arts which would be worthy of the technological and revolutionary era. Mayakovsky and his colleagues called the realist writers bourgeois, and the so-called proletarian writers official and academic. The LEF magazine published some of the finest works of the period, including Isaac Babel's superb *Red Cavalry*. Lecturing in defence of LEF, Mayakovsky said in 1927: "When Babel came to the capital three years ago with a collection of his short stories, he was received with bayonets. They told him: 'If you saw such things in the Red Cavalry, you should have reported them to the commanding officer instead of putting them into a story.' . . . After that LEF—because LEF does not follow the line of stereotyped criticism—published his best stories." The magazine folded right after the publication of the stories. (Babel was liquidated during the purges ten years later.)

Mayakovsky was shaken by LEF's failure, and, partly to get away from his critics, undertook a long trip through Europe and America in 1925. But the journey only served to agitate him more, for in America he was compelled to alter at least one long-standing conviction, and this was that technology represented an unmixed blessing for mankind. America frightened him, as it had frightened many a European during the frantic, booming, money-mad 'twenties.

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Mayakovsky saw New York as a suffocating prison of tunnels, elevateds, elevators, and sinister streets where "the filth is worse than in Minsk. It is extremely dirty in Minsk." Besides, he felt desperately homesick as he travelled alone, in the infernal summer heat, to Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and other unlovely monuments to industrialisation. On his way home, he made another discovery: France, which had once seemed the most decadent of capitalist countries, now had a certain charm for him. His account of his journey ends on this note:

> In comparison with America's wretched hovels, each inch of land (in France) has been captured by age-long struggle, exhausted by centuries and used with pharmaceutical minuteness to grow violets or lettuce. But even this despised sort of little house, this little bit of land, this property, even this deliberate clinging for centuries seemed to me now an unbelievable cultural milieu in comparison with the bivouac-type set-up and the self-seeking character of American life.

Mayakovsky returned to Moscow from this journey in an abject mood. After his loneliness abroad and his disturbing impressions of America and France, he yearned—temporarily, at least—to submit to the familiar certitudes of Communism. The result was *Back Home!*, a poem which is at once the most outrageous and the most pathetic expression of Mayakovsky's attraction to dictatorship—outrageous, as he calls upon the Gosplan, a commissar, a factory committee, and Stalin himself to command his work—and pathetic as he explains, *"I/from poetry's skies/plunge into Communism,/because /without it/I feel no love."* The mood did not last long. Even while writing *Back Home!*, he sensed that his reception in Moscow would not be reassuring. A first version of the poem ended: *"I want to be understood by my country, but if I fail to be understood/what then?/I shall pass through my native land/to one side/like a shower/of slanting rain."*

BACK home, the "proletarian" hacks he so despised for their conservatism were gaining power. Mayakovsky's attempt to revive the LEF magazine in 1927 failed almost at once under their assault. By 1928, the RAPP (Association of Proletarian Writers) controlled Soviet literary life; the era of liberalism in the arts was very nearly over. Some of the most independent and original of Soviet intellectuals were now being attacked for their "anarchism," and, more ominously, for their "Trotskyist left-deviations." Writers were called upon to be "shock workers" in "art brigades" in the service of the first Five-year Plan. Stalin, now embarked on the forced collectivisation of the peasantry, was preparing the way for the decimation of the intelligentsia.

At this point, Mayakovsky passed into the most genuinely tragic period of his life. During the two years before his suicide he came closest to an awareness of the nature of the society he had once acclaimed. He saw the conflict between the ideals and the reality of Communism, between the individual and the collective, between the artist and the bureaucrat. And although this knowledge ultimately proved intolerable, it is to Mayakovsky's honour that, at the last, he chose to confront it in his art.

In 1928, he wrote one of the most devastating satires of Communist society in contemporary literature: *The Bedbug* (*Klop*). In the first half of the play, he sees the Russia of 1928 in terms of the Soviet bourgeoisie: the profiteers, the Party fat cats, the proletarian philistines. His villain is Prisypkin, the bedbug-infested, guitar-strumming, vodka-soaked vulgarian who is the possessor of a Party card and a proletarian pedigree. In the second half, Mayakovsky foresees the Communist millennium. Now, in 1978, the excesses of a Prisypkin are unthinkable. Sex, vodka, tobacco, dancing, and romance are merely items in the lexicon of archaisms. The hero? None other than Prisypkin who has been resurrected as a zoological curiosity and who begins to look nearly human in this dehumanised world. He is lost, frightened, utterly deprived of love—in short, he is a caricature of his author. To sharpen the resemblance on stage, Mayakovsky took pains to teach the actor who played Prisypkin his own mannerisms.

Mayakovsky was making fun of his own youthful hopes in the second part of *The Bedbug*. In 1919, he had prophesied that *"in the new world/roses and daydreams once desecrated by poets/will blossom,/to gladden/the eyes/of us overgrown children."* But when Prisypkin plaintively requests books on roses and daydreams, he is told that "nobody knows anything about what you asked for. Only text-books on horticulture have anything on roses, and daydreams are dealt with only in medical works—in the section on hypnosis." In *About This* (1923), Mayakovsky had petitioned a chemist of the "Future Workshop of Human Resurrection" of the 30th Century: *"I have not lived out my earthly span/on earth/I have not finished loving/ . . . Resurrect me/I want to live out my life!/ . . . I'll do anything you want for nothing/ . . . Do you/have/zoos?/Let me be a keeper. . . ."* Prisypkin ends up *inside* a cage in a zoo, with an armed keeper.

Prisypkin's last lines are an ominous invitation. Momentarily released from his cage, he walks to the footlights and addresses the audience: "Citizens! Brothers! My own people! Darlings! How did you get here? So many of you! . . . Why am I alone in the cage? Darlings,

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friends, come and join me! Why am I suffering? Citizens!"

MAYAKOVSKY'S audience was not ready to recognise his warning in 1928. The nature of the Stalinist utopia was as yet beyond the imagination of all but prophets, madmen, and poets. Moreover, *The Bedbug* was first produced in Meyerhold's most constructivist style, then much too avant-garde for a mass audience. In short, the play was not a success. After a three-month run in Moscow, it was performed only rarely, briefly, and usually in abridged form, for twenty-five years. In 1937, Meyerhold was accused in *Pravda* of consistently producing anti-Soviet plays. He was arrested in 1939 and perished in a concentration camp during the war. Mayakovsky would unquestionably have joined Meyerhold if he had not taken his execution into his own hands.

But in 1928 Mayakovsky's position was still reasonably secure. *Pravda* had praised *The Bedbug*; no one dared attack the play openly, but Mayakovsky was nonetheless aware of grumblings behind the scenes. A few days after the first public reading of *The Bedbug*, he published a poem which, he confided to friends, he knew to be a "bomb:" *Letter from Paris to Comrade Kostrov on the Nature of Love*. Kostrov, the editor of the magazine *Young Guard*, had commissioned him to write some political articles and poems from Paris where Mayakovsky spent a month in 1928. But instead of providing the editor with his customary accounts of French decadence, he submitted an ecstatic love poem. Writing from Paris, where he had fallen in love, Mayakovsky suggested that such a man as Kostrov would neither comprehend nor curb the overwhelming force of the poet's passions; *"hurricane,/fire,/water/surge forward, rumbling/Who/can/control this?/Can you?/Try it. . . ."*

The poem was received angrily by the authorities, as was the news of Mayakovsky's Parisian love-affair. The girl, as all Moscow now knew, was a worldly White Russian emigrée—*"a beauty/all inset in furs and beads,"* as he described her in his poem. Tatiana Yakovleva had fled from from Russia in 1925 to join her uncle, the well-known painter Alexander Yakovlev, in Paris. Greatly admired for her statuesque Russian-style beauty, she moved in a circle of famous and fashionable people, and posed for the fashion pages of *Vogue*. At eighteen, when Mayakovsky first encountered her, she was a dazzling creature in her furs and beads, and, as he well knew, the most unorthodox partner imaginable for a Soviet citizen of his reputation.

Nevertheless it appeared that they were exceedingly well-suited; friends remarked that they resembled one another physically and temperamentally. Nearly as tall as Mayakovsky, Tatiana had something like the same powerfully moulded features, the same direct, determined manner. Moreover, Mayakovsky was thrilled over her "perfect pitch" for poetry; he recited his verses to her by the hour. Despite their differences in age and background, the intelligent and strong-willed Tatiana could meet Mayakovsky on his own ground. He was, in turn, extraordinarily gentle with her and tried to tone down his ordinarily rough, crude language in her presence. Clearly, he was more wholeheartedly in love than ever before in his life; he wanted, at all costs, to remove Tatiana from her circle of admirers, marry her, and take her back to Moscow with him.

When Mayakovsky returned home he felt wretched without Tatiana. "To work and to wait for you is my only joy," he emphasised in a letter to her, as he completed work on *The Bedbug* and rushed it through production. At the end of February, 1929, a week after the opening of his play, he fled to Tatiana. By this time, Mayakovsky had learned to love Paris, in company with the ravishing Tatiana. Her smart, luxurious world now had a strong appeal for him. He bought hand-made suits for himself, and dresses for Lily Brik, to whom he was still curiously attached. The Parisian salons he frequented with Tatiana made Moscow life seem provincial by comparison. Together, they visited Le Touquet, and Paris Plage, a resort near Deauville, where he spent days at the roulette tables, among Europe's most fashionable people. But by the time his visa had expired at the end of March, he had not succeeded in persuading her to follow him to Moscow. She was, quite understandably, reluctant to take the risk, but Mayakovsky still hoped to bring her around on a subsequent visit, or, at least, spend as much time with her in Paris as possible in the future.

His letters and telegrams to Tatiana from Moscow during the summer and fall of 1929 reflect his growing anxiety about their reunion. "I am trying to see you as soon as possible," he wired in May. In June he sent a series of telegrams: "Am very depressed . . . impossibly depressed . . . absolutely depressed . . . yearning for you unprecedentedly . . . yearning for you regularly and recently not even regularly but even more often." By July, he was desperate, and suggested that she come as an "engineer" to Russia and settle with him in the desolate Altai region. Finally, in September, when he was scheduled to leave for Paris at last, he wrote: "It is impossible to repeat and enumerate all these sorrows that make me even more taciturn." He had been refused a visa by the authorities. "Only a great, good love could still save me," he had told

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friends in 1927. Now he was saying, "I am being torn, chopped into pieces; people are being ripped away from me." In December he learned that Tatiana had married a Frenchman.[9]

THE denial of a visa to Mayakovsky was obviously an attempt to break his independence. But even in his grief over the loss of Tatiana, he had the courage to fight back; his play, *The Bath-house* (*Banya*) was a direct assault on the bureaucracy that was closing in on him. *The Bath-house*'s main character is the grotesque Pobedonosikov, the director of a huge "co-ordination" service, who is busily engaged in avoiding work. His activities include having his portrait painted to "immortalise the new-style administrator."

"How shiny your boots are," raves the painter. "Makes one feel like licking them! Only Michelangelo had such pure lines. Do you know Michelangelo?"

"Angelov, an Armenian?" answers the director.

The cultural bureaucrats had tolerated Mayakovsky's satire of the Communist millennium in *The Bedbug*, but they were determined not to let him get away with assailing the present-day régime. After a first reading in February, 1930, *Glavrepertkom*, the theatre censorship committee, declared that the play was not acceptable in its present form. Only Mayakovsky's still-formidable reputation saved it from being scrapped altogether. After some alterations, it was produced the following month and failed as badly as *The Bedbug*. This time, some of Mayakovsky's enemies were outspoken, both in the press and in public meetings. A few reviews had a sinister ring. The critic and official of RAPP, Vladimir Ermilov, for example, insinuated in *Pravda* that Mayakovsky was playing the game of the Trotskyist opposition. A few days later, Mayakovsky composed a slogan which he had painted on a huge poster and displayed in the Meyerhold Theatre:

> YOU CAN'T IMMEDIATELY STEAM OUT THE SWARM OF BUREAUCRATS.
> THERE WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH BATH-HOUSES OR SOAP.
> BESIDES, THE BUREAUCRATS ARE AIDED BY THE PEN OF CRITICS—LIKE ERMILOV.

Ermilov protested; RAPP ordered that the poster be removed at once. Here the incident ended until Mayakovsky recalled it a month later. A postscript to his suicide note reads: "Tell Ermilov it was a pity he removed the slogan; we should have fought it out."

Always hyper-sensitive to criticism and stricken by failure, Mayakovsky believed he was now the victim of persecution. In reality, his enemies were more restrained in their criticism than he imagined, or as is generally supposed in the West. Yet his presentiment of tragedy was, as always, uncanny; the purges of the intelligentsia were at hand. Mayakovsky evidently sensed that he would be among the first to be condemned. His last important poem, the unfinished *At the Top of My Voice*, was conceived as a monument to a doomed man—Vladimir Mayakovsky. The poem was clearly inspired by Pushkin who, at the age of thirty-seven, five months before his death, had written:

> *No hands have wrought my monument; no weeds*
> *will hide the nation's footpath to its site.*
> *Tsar Alexander's column it exceeds*
> *in splendid insubmissive height.*[10]

Mayakovsky echoed:

> *My verse*
> *by labour*
> *will break the mountain chain of years,*
> *and will present itself*
> *ponderous,*
> *crude,*
> *tangible,*
> *like an aqueduct,*
> *by slaves of Rome*
> *constructed,*
> *enters our days.*

Here, in *At the Top of My Voice*, he made a final defence of the purity of his ideals and the quality of his accomplishments in the name of socialism, *"above the heads/of a gang of self-seeking/poets and rogues."* Here, too, he indicated the cost of these accomplishments: *"Agitprop/sticks/in my teeth too/. . . But I/ subdued/myself,/setting my heel/on the throat /of my own song."*

MAYAKOVSKY was immensely wearied by the polemics of the last months of his life. He made the effort to debate his critics at public meetings, but his answers to heckling from the floor were often contradictory, even incoherent. After he had made a speech at the House of Komsomol on March 25th, the following exchange took place:

> *Question from the floor:* Are you a Party member?
> *Mayakovsky:* No, I'm not.
> *Voice:* You should be.

[9] In connection with this reconstruction of Mayakovsky's last two journeys to Paris and his correspondence with Tatiana Yakovleva, I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Yakovleva and to Professor Roman Jakobson of Harvard University.

[10] *Exegi Monumentum* (1836), translated by Vladimir Nabokov, in *Three Russian Poets* (New Directions, New York, 1944).

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> *Mayakovsky:* I don't think so. . . . I have acquired a large number of habits which are incompatible with organised work. Perhaps it is a wild prejudice but I have been carrying on such a bitter struggle, I have been attacked so much. . . . Instead of organised struggle I made anarchic forays because I thought that such a line in literature would converge with the proletarian line. . . . Why the devil am I forced to do things that one doesn't need to do! Habits acquired in the pre-revolutionary years are firmly rooted in me. I do not sever myself from the Party and regard myself obliged to carry out all the commands of the Bolshevik Party, even though I do not carry a Party card.

At the beginning of April, Mayakovsky was taken to the Kremlin hospital for a few days with a breakdown which was diagnosed as nervous exhaustion. After his release, he stated at a writers' meeting that "so much abuse is being flung at me and I'm being accused of so many sins (real and unreal) that I sometimes think that I should go away somewhere for a year or two so as not to listen to so much invective." An acquaintance, who ran into him in the lobby of the Meyerhold theatre on April 10th, recalls the following: "He was very gloomy. I started talking to him about how at last there had been an article in *Pravda* giving an objective assessment of *The Bath-house.* Mayakovsky replied: 'Never mind. It's too late now.' Then I understood him to mean that it didn't matter because the play had already been cursed to pieces." Four days later, Mayakovsky was dead.

His suicide note, addressed "to all," reads in part:

> Do not blame anyone for my death and please do not gossip. The deceased terribly disliked this sort of thing. Mamma, sisters, and comrades, forgive me—this is not a way out (I do not recommend it to others) but I have none other. Lily—love me. . . . Comrades of VAPP—do not think me weak-spirited. Seriously—there was nothing else I could do. Greetings.

What followed was worthy of Mayakovsky's prophesies of the brave new world of 1978. *Literary Gazette* reported that at 8 p.m. on the day of his death, the State Institute for the Study of the Brain extracted Mayakovsky's brain; it weighed 1,700 grams as against an average of 1,400, and was put in the Institute's "Pantheon." During the next days, 150,000 people came to view his body as it lay in state at the Club of the Writers' Federation, under a wreath made of hammers, fly-wheels, and screws which bore the inscription, "AN IRON WREATH TO AN IRON POET." His obituary in *Pravda* contained a cry of outrage by the ultra-proletarian poet, Demyan Bedny:

> Monstrous. Incomprehensible. The tragedy of his so unexpected end is heightened by its triviality which is completely out of tune with the questing and original nature of Mayakovsky. And this ghastly letter before his death which is so ghastly in its triviality—what sort of a justification is this? . . . I cannot explain this except as a sudden mental collapse, a loss of inner orientation, a morbid crisis of personal experience, an acute psychosis.

At the funeral, another sort of explanation was provided by members of RAPP, led by the critic, Leopold Averbach. The trouble was, they chorused, that Mayakovsky had not become a truly proletarian poet; the dead hand of the past had still been upon him. Said Averbach: "Mayakovsky gave an example of how one should reform oneself and also of how difficult it is to do this. In his last letter Mayakovsky asked his comrades of RAPP not to condemn his act. We do condemn his act . . . but we pay homage to the gigantic creative path which he has travelled." Unfortunately for Averbach and his colleagues, Stalin was to put still another interpretation on Mayakovsky's death: he blamed it on them. After the liquidation of RAPP in 1932, it was ultimately revealed that Mayakovsky had been driven to his grave by "enemies of the people" in RAPP.[11]

Nevertheless, the fact of Mayakovsky's suicide still troubled some Party purists. For several years, contributors to *Literary Gazette*'s Mayakovsky anniversary numbers suggested that he had not been, after all, a "reinforced-concrete proletarian poet." And although his verse continued to be published in enormous editions, cases of "over-vigilance" were reported in the press. Misguided bureaucrats, for example, had removed his books from children's libraries as "allegedly unsuitable," and the chief of broadcasting for the lower Volga region, a certain Comrade Lemaren (who had recently changed his name to an abbreviation of the trinity Lenin-Marx-Engels) forbade the recitation of Mayakovsky's *Vladimir Ilich Lenin* because he had doubts as to the poem's political soundness.

AS THE time of the great purges approached, it became increasingly difficult for a good Communist to know what line to take on Mayakovsky—or on any other Soviet intellectual. It appeared that the official critic who denounced a writer on one day might be liquidated the next, along with his victim. Finally, all doubts about Mayakovsky were dispelled by Stalin in

[11] This Stalinist myth, which endured in Russia until recently, is evidently at the source of the assumption, widely held abroad, that Mayakovsky died the victim of a campaign of persecution.

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1935, during the period of mass arrests which followed the assassination of Kirov. Banner headlines carried Stalin's message to the Soviet people: *"Mayakovsky was and remains the best and the most talented poet of our Soviet epoch."* Rarely quoted nowadays, but infinitely more meaningful at the time, is the second part of his message: *"Indifference to his memory and to his works is a crime."* Within days, the Council of People's Commissars reported that they had renamed Moscow's Triumphal Square after Mayakovsky. A new subway line was excavated in his honour. His statues cropped up in Parks of Culture and Rest all over the nation. Commissars and critics began vying with each other in proclaiming the orthodoxy of his political views. His ashes were removed from a mortuary and placed among the graves of Gogol and Stalin's wife, in Moscow's Novo-Devechy cemetery, where they now rest under a gigantic red and black marble monument.

Of Mayakovsky's fate since Stalin's pronouncement, Pasternak has written that he "began to be introduced forcibly, like potatoes under Catherine the Great. This was his second death. He had no hand in it."

Elegy

The world burst (*plap!*) like a black balloon
In a black room:
Black silence, a black moon.
This occurred on a summer afternoon
In the year 1959 on July the 3rd.

The enormous nostrils of everywhere
Were pinched tight, hard;
Blind to reek, stench and sweet rumour,
To laborious sweat,
And deaf to the aria of the rose.

Music knifed in a flash,
Daggered at that *plap*!

Ridiculous. And ridiculous, too,
That all the wild wide women then were sealed,
Stopped, blocked and chilled,
When my old friend, the boozer Bellamy, expired
As I suppose, in that same tick of time,
And equally absurdly,
Five hundred thousand other worlds misfired,
Speaking statistically.

Vernon Scannell

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NOTES & TOPICS

Curzio Malaparte

KURT ERICH SUCKERT, called Curzio Malaparte, was only ten years older than "we" were. "We" were young writers and journalists who, twenty or twenty-five years ago in Italy, were hoping to make our way and were still unknown to the general public. Did we choose each other knowing we should later succeed, did we have some secret sign? Did we really believe that one day we would be able to write what we liked and what really interested us? Everything made us suppose that we should live, like so many other obscure little groups, in the shadows, known only to a few like-minded acquaintances.

We were tied to no programme, and we had no name, like the Futurists or the Nationalists before us. We were united by indefinable links, read what our friends had written with pleasure and occasionally with envy, and understood one another's allusions; there were few, in fact, apart from ourselves, who managed to laugh at our mysterious jokes. We met, that was all; lunched together in Rome or Milan; exchanged untopical irrelevant ideas. Above all, we were annoyed by the same things, things we hated, despised, and ridiculed. The sense of "our generation" was something that linked us, no doubt about that; but this had nothing to do with the dull fact of birth dates. It was a matter of being formed alike, of having the same *sensibilité*, and in fact some of us were younger and some older than the norm, among them the painter and caricaturist Amerigo Bartoli and the writer Paolo Monelli, who were both older than Malaparte.

We had all grown up and been formed in the years after the first World War: Alberto Moravia, Indro Montanelli, Dino Buzzati, Ercole Patti, Guido Piovene, Leo Longanesi, Mario Soldati, to name just a few. We were at school while others were fighting. We were still students when there was the first street-fighting between Fascists and anti-Fascists. How irritated we were by Italian rhetoric, and how disgusted by the way of the official world around us! Malaparte, though, belonged to that world, had fought in the war with conviction, and was steeped in the fashionable ideologies of the day. For this reason he did not appear to us as a slightly older brother, but as a venerable—even if vigorous—example of another historical period, as an adversary.

He wasn't quite as old as his ideas, and how young he looked, with the faultless youthfulness of a wax statue. We attributed this remarkable fact to the miraculous diet which he followed with monastic discipline, to the regularity of his life, in which vice and women mattered little, and to the exercises which (he said) he performed diligently every morning. And Malaparte died before his "cheeks drooped," died with the untroubled face of a young man, with his straight hair still thick and black, and still with his air of being a grown-up adolescent confused and worried by the ideas of a world to which he didn't really belong. One day, it was always said, he would write maturely, freed from acrobatic politics and literary trickery. But he never had time to write these last books of his; this he regretted, and even said so to a friend a few days before he died. He was something of a poet, no doubt. His language was rare, he had a unique feeling for Italian prose and its rhythm, and was so skilful that he could change his style and flavour with each book, like an actor who changes with each play, almost parodying himself. His intuition was sometimes profound and illuminating, as when he wrote of the Tuscans and of Tuscany, where he was born and grew up, and especially of Prato, his home town. His last book, *Quei Maledetti Toscani* (*Those Cursed Tuscans*), which dealt with the subject he loved best, contains some magnificent passages among others ruined by arrogance and jumbled repetitiousness. Malaparte rarely failed to charm, even when he failed to ring true. He was basically so attractive that he became annoying and suspect; he was too clever, and could never speak for us. He had grown up too quickly, had matured too precociously, had made himself known to the generation that preceded him while he was still at school, and was fatally linked to the old, as indeed so often happens with *enfants prodigés*. The distance between him and us was short but impassable; it was like the space between a rearguard withdrawing and a vanguard advancing.

WHAT annoyed us most about him was the smell of D'Annunzio. Not that Malaparte was a D'Annunzian and imitated his precious prose. Not at all. He obviously thought himself his successor, and had things to dispute with him and his followers. All the same, we felt he could not escape a profound resemblance, due not so much to any conscious effort as to the age he had lived in and the air he had breathed. All that was D'Annunzian about his prose were a few unfortunate tricks and some bad habits—the use of strange words, the assumption of superhuman airs, an air of self-satisfaction—not

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from necessity but for effect, to get applause and shouted bravos from the audience. What was really D'Annunzian in Malaparte was his "heroic" life. At seventeen, in 1914 (the year in which D'Annunzio, then fifty, was preaching from Arcachon the need to fight beside our "Latin Sister"), he volunteered for the Garibaldians, and was among the first irregular Italian troops at the front in France. When Italy declared war on Austria the following year (D'Annunzio had aroused in the young a wave of enthusiasm for Italian intervention in the war, in his speech at Quarto on the 5th of May, 1915), Malaparte joined the regular army.

He fought bravely and honourably right to the end, earning decorations and promotion for his heroism in the war, and severe reprimands for some unmilitary "artistic" oddities and whims. Yet one can see in him too the longing to live through an adventure of "blood and glory" in the Italian literary and political taste of the day. He did not go to Fiume with D'Annunzio and I have never understood why. It would have suited him. After the war, though, to make up for it, he was one of the first Fascists, in the "Disperata" troops in Florence. His Fascism was literary as well: the defence of the "barbarous" Italians against modern industrial Europe and America. At that time he wrote a famous anthem which rather complacently imitated various peasant songs:

Sorge il sole, canta il gallo,
Mussolini monta a cavallo....

The sun rises, the cock crows,
Mussolini mounts his horse....

He became one of the most brilliant journalists of the new régime, editor-in-chief of *La Stampa* in Turin—until his imprisonment in 1933 for various misdemeanours. Among other things he had written an insolent letter to the editor of a newspaper in Ferrara, the mouthpiece of Italo Balbo, accusing the Fascist chief of wanting to take over from Mussolini. Balbo at once asked for him to be punished; and Mussolini, for his own private reasons, wanted nothing better. Malaparte was arrested and sent to Lipari. All the same, no anti-Fascist considered the imprisoned writer a serious opponent of the régime. He was a man who had merely offended one of its minor bosses by defending Mussolini from an imaginary threat. He was obviously a faithful follower whose capricious, anarchical character made it impossible for him to keep calm and enjoy the advantages his past as a stormtrooper might have given him.

The truth was that Malaparte was not even a Fascist. He had a D'Annunzian longing to keep in the limelight, to warm himself in the glow of the powerful, to interpret the desires of the crowd with a word or a gesture. But he lacked D'Annunzio's genius, and was never famous or authoritative enough through his work to allow himself all his eccentricities. The woman Curzio loved most of all, and at one time was going to marry, was born a Roman princess (like the girl D'Annunzio married), but became the widow of one of the most powerful industrialists in Europe, and was undoubtedly the richest woman in Italy: ideal for a climber, perhaps, but not for a poet. None of the other women in his life was as well known and romantic as D'Annunzio's Eleonora. No novelettish and fanciful great lady abandoned palaces and horses and income, husband, and children, to follow him. Although when I knew him Malaparte always had a girl with him, it was always some pale, gentle creature who hardly said a word. No one can compare the outcry which D'Annunzio's French works—his *Martyre de Saint Sebastian* and other plays—aroused in Paris with the failure of Malaparte's *Das Kapital*, when it opened there.

D'Annunzio was sincerely admired and loathed by his outstanding contemporaries. Malaparte managed to irritate mildly and to charm only obscure and unpretentious souls. With Mussolini he soon quarrelled. Shortly after 1922 Curzio criticised his taste in ties and made an enemy of him for ever (Mussolini's ties were, in fact, hideous). His best friend was Galeazzo Ciano, who got him out of prison and defended him: a rather provincial creature, drunk with his position as the Dictator's son-in-law, as an intimate friend of Princess Colonna's, as an important man in the régime. And, finally, Malaparte never had the opportunity to undertake anything really important, anything "legendary," comparable to D'Annunzio's speech at Quarto, to his flight over Vienna, or to the occupation of Fiume.

This passion of his, which urged him fatally towards the source of power like a moth flinging itself at the flame, was even more clearly shown after the end of the second World War. Who was on top? Who was ultimately going to come out on top? After the arrival of the Allies, Malaparte (at Capri, of course) became liaison officer to the U.S. Army, attached to the office of Military Information at Naples, and at the same time became friendly with Palmiro Togliatti. He was one of the first Italian writers to contribute to *Unità*, the Communist daily, signing himself with a pseudonym, Gianni Strozzi. Strozzi is the name of a ducal family in Florence (and the name of a well-known palace much admired by tourists); the mythical journalist was supposed to sound like someone open-minded and young ("Gianni"—Johnny—and not Giovanni), with a noble past behind him ("Strozzi"),

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who realised that the world was changing and that one must be a Communist in Italy in 1944, just as one had to be a liberal in 1870, a war-enthusiast in 1914, and a Fascist in 1919, all so as not to be forgotten or left by the wayside. (Even D'Annunzio, elected a right-wing deputy, was at one point seized with suspicion that the Right counted rather less than he had imagined, and went over to the Left with the famous remark, "I'm going where life is....") Later, Malaparte realised that the Communists were simply not going to make it in a democratic Europe rebuilt by the Americans and ruled by the great democratic parties of the masses. What mattered were the people, the public, where everybody was.

ONLY in numbers was there real power. So he flung himself into everything that belonged to the people—large-circulation newspapers, the cinema, the theatre—at all costs seeking success. He wrote two international best-sellers, *Kaputt* and *La Pelle*, synthetic works written in bad faith to shock and fascinate millions. He wrote and directed an interesting film, *Forbidden Christ*, and composed the music for it as well; it had a critical but not a box-office success, for its very qualities prevented it from reaching the mass audience which could not have understood it. He wrote and staged a revue called *Sexophone* in which, his face smeared with make-up and his lips reddened, he acted and sang. (He was howled down and lost 23 million lire out of his own pocket.)

His breathless and futile search for resounding popular success after the war was pathetic. It was born, I think, from his fear of being surpassed, of failing to be a man of his time; and it all made one feel dizzy and almost panic-stricken, as if one were watching balancing tricks or trapeze acts performed by an elderly, out-of-condition acrobat. However much he kept up-to-date and "ultra modern," a hint of his background remained. He wore thick, rebellious-looking sweaters, and lived an irregular existence without a home, camping out with friends. And yet he never seemed at all like a revolutionary organiser, a Marxist intellectual, or an angry young man, but only a romantic Bohemian in Paris, vintage 1910, a kind of "Dedo" Modigliani, dissolute but somehow elegant. The title of his revue, *Sexophone*, hints at all this, for it was a vulgar and pointless kow-towing to the taste of a public that hardly existed any longer (the lower-middle-class Italian of 1919 who was alarmed at the notion of saxophones and sex and Negro music). His weekly tirades in the revue *Tempo* contained the early ideas of Fascism and were apparently enjoyed mostly by men over fifty.

Over the years Malaparte seemed to forget that he was by nature a writer, a poet, a man of letters, and wasted his gifts in ranting and film-making, in cheap skits and sketches and dubious journalism; he was too good to succeed with the masses, and too insincere to succeed with critical and thoughtful readers.

THE last time I saw Malaparte was the day before he left for China, on the journey from which he was to return condemned to death by lung cancer. We were at a reception for Ilya Ehrenburg, who was passing through Rome at the time.

The famous Soviet writer stood angrily in the middle of a silly little room, among flowery cretonnes, cream-coloured curtains, and pink mirrors with figures of 18th-century ladies and courtiers cut in the glass: "period" surroundings that went back to 1935, the time when Italy was an "invincible" empire which "neither men nor events would cast down." Ehrenburg was surrounded by a group of Roman "friends of Soviet culture," young Communist intellectuals who carried little weight since they were ordered to admire whomever was sent to them in the same way. These youths were all pale, all bespectacled, and dressed in new suits like guests at a country wedding. They vaguely resembled one another, just like the relatives at a family ceremony, in fact; and their women, mistresses or wives, whichever they were, were all vaguely alike too, and all had the bedraggled and un-*soigné* air of women who had run away from home.

They all stood closely hedged around him, to prevent him seeing the empty spaces beyond and in the adjoining rooms, and those nearest to him asked him rather trivial questions. They all laughed heartily at his answers, though there was nothing funny about them, and turned to repeat them in Italian to those who were standing farther off, who laughed all over again. Either the importance of the occasion, or the fact that they saw no one around that they did not already know, made them nervous. There were those who wrote for the literary pages of the dailies, or for the cultural weeklies, or the learned monthlies; and a few more. There was me, but I didn't count. Every time they heard the bell ring as the door opened, they all turned as expectantly as a man waiting for a fish to bite his line, hoping the new arrival would be someone from the bourgeois world, some attractive opponent to seduce. But nothing happened. A few elderly non-Communists turned up, but they were familiar faces of people who sit among the distinguished visitors at Party congresses, who sign petitions for this and that, make enthusiastic trips to China, and go to every congress beyond the Iron Curtain; unimportant folk

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who seemed quite uninteresting to me, and, for other reasons, even more uninteresting to the intellectuals of the extreme Left. They greeted them with a brief wave, unsmilingly.

Ehrenburg had shaggy, untidy grey hair, and eyelids half shut over eyes that peered about like those of an alligator lying awake in the mud. He wore a green shirt with a wide soft collar that left his neck free, and a brand-new, brilliant red tie with wiggles on it (undoubtedly bought in Italy). His suit was of an odd, rough, multi-coloured material, a fake tweed woven with little flecks of red, green, peacock-blue, white, and yellow, the latest fashion in Moscow, very likely. And he wore sandals. The Great Revolutionaries almost all wear sandals, or shoes made of criss-cross strips of leather, or punctured with little holes, as if feet destined to show humanity's inevitable and scientific march forward are more delicate, more sensitive to heat than others. He stood patiently in the middle of the circle, letting himself be watched like an example of some rare disease shown to a group of medical students, chain-smoking long Russian cigarettes which he took from their cardboard package, dropping ash about on his waistcoat, on his sandals, on the carpet. His fingers were stained dark yellow with nicotine.

Someone asked him: "What are you writing at the moment?" He answered in French: "What am I writing, what am I writing? ... Can't a writer ever stop writing? It's like being sentenced without a hope of reprieve." Those nearest him laughed at once, the others laughed after them. Then someone asked: "Is it an ambitious work, something as important as your last novel?" (This was a rather daring political question. His last work had been *The Thaw*.) And he replied: "When you're writing, you always think you're doing something important. If not, you wouldn't write. Then, when you've read the reviews, you think again...." He refused to say more, to talk of the theme of his work, to explain exactly what it was about.

Just then, at last, Malaparte came in. The young friends of Soviet culture smiled, relieved, and bade him welcome. They made way to let him through, and presented him to his foreign colleague. The two might have already met in Paris after the First World War, when the Russian was drinking absinthe in the cafés of the Left Bank with *avant-garde* intellectuals, in St. Petersburg during the Revolution, where Malaparte had been as a journalist, or in Berlin, the Berlin of George Grosz and tarts in boots, with riding whips, or simply at other meetings like this, in Russia or in Italy, on "cultural exchange" trips. Malaparte was tall and neat, wearing a rather tight brown tweed jacket and grey flannels, "English style," the uniform of his smart worldly youth. Only the sweater he wore instead of a shirt was meant to show his attachment to left-wing ideas, his open-mindedness. His hair was black, long, straight, and gleaming; his manner at once majestic and pleasant. Now that I think of it, they were indeed a pair. They were "rebels" from the early years of the century, their careers had sometimes been triumphant, sometimes difficult, according to whether their latest ideas had seemed useful or harmful to those in power. Malaparte, like the Russian, had always been pulled in opposite directions, between the rude and "barbarous" simple people of his country, and the mirage of a scientific, mechanised, onrushing, and pitiless future.

Malaparte was to leave for China the following day. He had come to ask his Soviet colleague for details, for introductions to intellectuals in Peking, for advice and information. The Russian listened, watching him warily from under his eyelids. He refused to make any statements, perhaps because Malaparte talked indiscreetly in public, too casually, clearly, and enthusiastically, like every neophyte, of things that were new to him, whose dangers and undertones he could not guess; because any conversation with him might be wrongly interpreted. All Ehrenburg said was: "When you come to Moscow, come and see me. We'll talk it over then and I'll give you all the letters you need...." And he listened in silence to Malaparte's reminiscences of Russia during the war. Very tactfully no one mentioned the fact that his reminiscences were those of a journalist who had followed the Nazi and Fascist armies. He spoke of the peasants he had met in the Ukraine. The young people round him nodded and laughed, to please their compatriot as much as anything, because at that time they had at all costs to foster the Party's popularity.

In the end the famous Soviet writer roused himself for the first time and smiled. It was when Malaparte told him what some old men in the Ukraine said to the Italian soldiers. They said: "Itali, Italianski, mir ... mir...." Now the word *mir*, as everyone knows, means *peace*. It is a word people can always agree on, one of the key words of Soviet politics. The Russian livened up, and hastened to translate it. *"Paix, paix...*. They meant that there was no war between them and the Italian soldiers, they were all peasants together." Too late Malaparte realised the trap into which he had made the others fall, but he was unable to stop, and went on bravely to the end: "No, no, thirty years before they'd had a load of candles from Italy, and still remembered them. They remembered the trade mark, and were trying to repeat the name somehow—the only Italian word they knew, *Miralanza*." The famous Soviet writer again took on

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the patient air of some phenomenon displayed to the learned, and said hardly another word.

MALAPARTE came back from China with two Italian doctors who had gone to fetch him, to die in Italy. A great many people, friends and enemies, met him at Ciampino. Malaparte was broken, destroyed by an interminable journey from Peking to Prague in a Soviet plane with no pressure control that had to keep stopping here and there in Siberia and in Russia for various unexpected reasons. He looked like a ghost. As he went down the ladder, supported by friends, he looked about him and breathed: "Look, there's Moravia crying...." Months later he could still repeat without a single mistake the names of those who had come to meet him.

Round his bed in the Roman nursing home a silent struggle broke out between the Christian Democrats and the Communists, each hoping to boast, after his death, that the great name had been one of their faithful followers. From his bed he craftily kept them doubting till the very end. Perhaps he was undecided himself: which power should one back on the brink of death? Which was better, earthly fame as a friend of triumphant Communism, or the supernatural viaticum of a good Christian? To play on the two opposing parties he saw them all, one after the other, and reassured them all—Tambroni, Minister of the Interior, Palmiro Togliatti, Amintore Fanfani, and Pietro Secchia.

The Christian Democrats had one advantage. He was nursed by two nuns who took turns, day and night, and never left him. And two Jesuits often came to his bedside, Father Rotondo and Father Cappello. Father Rotondo was a man of culture, an intellectual who was to convert the writer with subtle arguments. Father Cappello was a holy, ascetic, mystical man, who was to touch the poet's heart. Malaparte had no real religion. Son of a German father, he thought of himself as a Protestant, perhaps simply because he had never been baptised. Anyone visiting him in the nursing home completely failed to understand, from his talk and from the objects he wanted near him, which party was in the ascendant. Below the window stood a table on which was a reproduction of Giovanni Pisano's *Madonna with a belt* which is at Prato and so might be considered a reminder of his youth and not strictly a religious symbol; two Chinese porcelain lions, a reminder of Communist China but also of its imperial past; the arms of the city of Prato, a present from the Communist mayor, and a "Prayer of Saint Francis," a present from the Bishop of Assisi, beside a blessed crucifix; a small statue of St. Rita of Cascia sent by a peasant who had made the journey to buy it on foot, and a small statue of a popular Chinese writer. There were two photographs—a portrait of Pius XII and a snapshot of himself (Malaparte) talking to Togliatti.

And, as we all know, neither side really won. At the last Malaparte asked to be baptised and died a Catholic. But in his will he left the villa he had built himself at Capri to the Chinese Communist writers' union.

MALAPARTE'S father was an eccentric, stubborn Saxon with whom he quarrelled all his life. His mother came from Lombardy, a northern Italian province. Not only was he not entirely Italian, he could not even boast any Tuscan blood, the blood of those he loved most, and understood and described better than many real Tuscans have done; nor did he even belong in Prato, his home town. In spite of this, few Tuscans were as Tuscan as he was, and few Italians as Italian; no one has shown, with more conscious satisfaction, the virtues and vices of Italians of every age better than Malaparte, who in fact seems more like a made-up "character" than a real man. Wasn't he a contemporary imitation of Pietro Aretino? Perhaps the explanation lies just there—in his mixed blood (he placed enormous importance on "blood"; one of his books is called *Blood*; and right to the end he refused a blood transfusion for fear of thinking another's thoughts and being animated by another's life).

Only a foreigner, perhaps, can manage to be so crudely Italian. The "italianate Englishman" has been a "devil incarnate" from the earliest days of the Renaissance, for the synthetic reproduction of the qualities that seem most obviously Italian in someone educated in another climate and another religion has really devilish results. The fact was that Malaparte was so conventionally Italian that he made all the rest of "us" feel we were not Italian. Our country was not the "barbarous" Italy he defended, an island in Europe, cut off from the life and culture of the rest of the continent, and inhabited by men who behaved as he did, but ("we" felt) a European nation, immersed in a common Western culture, and needing to be saved from "barbarians" like him. Which of us was right? Perhaps the irritation he aroused in us was due to the fact that we secretly feared he might be right; that he was the Italian, that is, and that we were the foreigners.

Luigi Barzini

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Future of the Liberal-Left

By Mark Bonham Carter

WHEN cousins quarrel, the prudent hold their peace. Yet the uncivil war of words that has been raging in the Labour Party since the election must be the concern of the country as a whole and perhaps of the Western world. When all is said and done the Labour Party is trying, in its own ferocious fashion, to define the kind of society which it wants to create and this is an essential activity of any Left-wing party. For the Left tries consciously to shape its environment, whereas the Right simply makes terms with whatever environment surrounds it. The Left tries to impose a pattern on nature, the Right accepts it. In this sense Mr. Macmillan's "Wind of Change" speech was a classic Conservative statement. He drew the attention of his audience to a change in the weather that had already occurred and advised them to take the necessary precautions. Their environment had altered, therefore their policies must alter. He simply reported on a fact that had come to his notice rather late in the day, namely that "the wind of change is blowing through the continent. The growth of national consciousness in Africa is a political fact, and we must accept it as such." The kernel of his message was that in existing circumstances apartheid would not work.

The Left-wing approach must be the opposite of this. What impresses the radical is not so much that apartheid does not work, but that it should not work. His purpose is to create a society in which it cannot work.

It is in this sense that the debate in the Labour Party is important for it is concerned with the nature and purpose of a Left-wing party in the 20th century. The outcome will have far more influence on British life than, say, Mr. R. A. Butler's activities at the Home Office. If a genuine alternative to Toryism emerges then Mr. Butler's struggles with his backwoodsmen (if successful) will have the doubtful merit of showing that Conservatives can do laboriously and belatedly what others can do easily.

For these and others reasons I read Mr. R. H. S. Crossman's article [ENCOUNTER, April] with high hopes. I was, alas, disappointed. Mr. Crossman is a comet; his place in the political firmament has never been very firmly fixed and no astronomer has yet been able to calculate the various times and places at which he will appear. But it is generally agreed that when he appears it bodes ill for someone or other in the fairly immediate future and particularly in his immediate vicinity. None the less, when he aligned himself with the pre-Copernicans, those who watched with wonder his loyalty to the Labour Party Establishment in the two years preceding the general election were truly amazed. It seemed impossible that Mr. Crossman was really a fundamentalist who accepted wholeheartedly the naïve interpretation of Clause 4, and of course, as his article "The Spectre of Revisionism" makes clear, it was impossible.

His argument according to my interpretation runs as follows:

1. Clause 4 does not commit the Labour Party to wholesale nationalisation but to something called "common ownership." The latter is not defined, but involves "the best obtainable system of popular administration and control," and thereby excludes as non-Socialist the kind of nationalisation instituted by the Attlee Government.

Therefore, the Labour Party must find a new and radical approach to this topic.

2. Though Mr. Crosland's article accurately reflects the mood of the country for the last eight years, he wrongly dismisses the crisis coming to "the affluent society" for two practical and for a variety of theoretical reasons. The practical reasons are that (a) since the beginning of the century the Left have only got in "when something went badly wrong," (b) the Labour Party was formed as a movement of protest committed to the Socialist transformation of society and to deny this would be to lose the confidence of the Labour Party workers.

Therefore what is wanted is not an alternative government, but an opposition which would warn the country of the troubles ahead and show that they can be overcome by Socialism.

The theoretical reasons are:

(a) Socialism needs to be adapted to the 20th century and what is required is a modern *Das Kapital* which would be something like a combination of the views of Dr. Balogh and Professor Galbraith.

(b) Mr. Crosland underestimates the crisis which faces the whole Western world when the balance of power shifts to the Communist countries. "History will force on our attention the superior efficiency of *nationalisation*" (my italics).

(c) A Socialist cannot admit that dictatorship is inherently more efficient than democracy. He must assert that democracy is not only better but *stronger* than its totalitarian adversaries.

Therefore it would be strange for the Labour Party to abandon the central importance of public ownership at the precise moment that the superiority of socialised economies is being triumphantly vindicated in world affairs. And therefore the Labour Party must stick to Clause 4

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while awaiting the crisis it predicts, adopting meanwhile the role of a fighting opposition rather than an alternative government.

THIS IS HARDLY A CHEERFUL ANALYSIS of the Labour Party's position to-day, nor are Mr. Crossman's positive proposals likely to induce in the Party's workers the euphoric confidence which he regards as so important. His formula for success consists mainly in taking thought for the future and this process will only bear electoral fruit if "something goes badly wrong." According to Mr. Crossman, the Labour Party must find a new and radical approach to nationalisation, and await the new critique of 20th-century society which will bring socialism up-to-date. Meanwhile it is advised to choose the role of a fighting opposition rather than that of an alternative government. Given that his premises are true, the consequence or something equally negative would certainly seem the only thing to do—even if it is an example of pessimistic Micawberism on an unusually large scale. But then his whole argument is the frankest admission of the bankruptcy of Socialism that has yet been published by an avowed Socialist.

According to Mr. Crossman, nationalisation *à la* Attlee is not Socialism nor is it common ownership, nor does he tell us what either of these slogans means (if anything). Indeed, it is implicit in his whole article that he does not know what Socialism is. If he did he would surely tell us more precisely what the radical approach would reveal. Therefore until Dr. Balogh and Professor Galbraith have produced an answer to this important question we can only hope that the Labour Party remains no more than a fighting opposition—and what an appropriate description that is—in the political wilderness.

But having been led by Mr. Crossman's advocacy to the surprising conclusion that this is the best thing that could happen to a political party with a not inglorious record in office, we are next informed that for purely practical reasons this process of re-thinking is unnecessary. The fighting opposition, loving what it fights for but still ignorant of what it loves, may find itself swept into office because the disaster which it predicts, occurs. In the 20th century, according to Mr. Crossman, a Left-wing party does not get power because of the policy which it supports but because "something goes badly wrong." Except therefore as a means of maintaining the morale of the party workers (and keeping Dr. Balogh occupied), neither Socialism nor its meaning matters a fig. There are pills produced to-day which stimulate and tranquillise at the same time. As far as Mr. Crossman is concerned, Socialism is simply that part of the pill which stimulates, the kernel which carries the punch is a knock-out drop. It is this that will sweep that ill-assorted triumvirate Messrs. Crossman, Cousins, and Foot into another 1945. And who, one wonders, is cast in the role of Lepidus?

Nor is it germane to his article to argue whether it is a useful political exercise to wait upon disaster, nor whether it is a healthy occupation for the opposition to wish for it. It will occur and for two reasons: first for the reasons given by Professor Galbraith in *The Affluent Society*, and secondly because the Communist countries will prove themselves stronger and more efficient than the West.

One criticism of *The Affluent Society* is that if it is taken literally by the English they will conclude that they are far nearer to the materialist Valhalla it depicts than is the case. Professor Galbraith is concerned with the U.S. in the next decade, not with the U.K. in 1960. We have some way to go before we reach the level of economic prosperity which he assumes or face the crisis of Affluence with which he is concerned. This is not to deny the reality or the importance of the problems he discusses, but merely to argue that they are not immediate in the sense that they will produce an electoral swing in the near future. There are few signs that Socialism has become more popular in America recently. There is very little evidence that the Galbraithian crisis is noticed by the population at large, or, if noticed, resented—rather the reverse. For Professor Galbraith it is primarily a crisis of values, of æsthetic and moral rather than economic dimensions. To assume that its advent here will produce a massive swing against the Tory party is to assume that the electorate are sensitive in these directions and furthermore, if Mr. Crossman is to benefit from it, that they will regard Galbraithian counter-measures as being in accordance with the fundamentalist beliefs mummified in Clause 4.

Nor, it must be admitted, does Mr. Crossman spend much time trying to substantiate this expectation. The disaster on which he pins his faith is that which will take place when the Communist countries first catch up with and then overtake the Western powers economically, thereby demonstrating the superior efficiency of nationalisation.

In view of his previous argument this is indeed a remarkable statement. Nationalisation *à la* Attlee is dismissed by Mr. Crossman as non-Socialist because it is bureaucratic, unconnected with common ownership, and does not conform with the criterion embodied in Clause 4, "the best obtainable system of popular administration and control." Yet he asserts that History—a well-known *deus ex machina* when combined with the future tense—will force on our attention the superior efficiency of Communist nationalisation which to Western eyes is intolerably bureaucratic and centralised and which, outside Yugoslavia, does not pretend to embody any element of popular administration or control.

Be this as it may, the superior efficiency of Socialism as demonstrated by the Communist bloc is Mr. Crossman's knock-out drop. It is on this that he relies to confute Mr. Crosland and indeed anyone else who would like to see a Left-wing party which is not committed to the visions of the Webbs and the phrases in which they embodied them. And by efficiency in this context we must assume that he means economic efficiency. So far the superior efficiency of Communism has only had a chance to vindicate itself in countries that are both politically and economically under-developed. It is certainly possible, though by no means proven, that the rate of accumulation in China may exceed that of India (itself under a "Socialistic" government) or Japan, but as Mr. Crossman admits, it may well be due to the authority which resides in a totalitarian

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government. This is a possibility which all Western countries watch with acute anxiety, for no one denies that it would be a major disaster if India and Africa were to join the Communist bloc. But the experience of under-developed countries is not necessarily relevant to our own future conduct. The purpose of these communities is to attain a degree of industrial development comparable to our own and the road they must follow can in general be foreseen. For us the problem must be quite different as Professor Galbraith makes clear. Because they are not yet affluent the problem of affluence does not confront the under-developed countries.

BUT EVEN SUPPOSING that the Communist countries showed themselves stronger than the West—and they might well do so for reasons quite distinct from their particular régimes—is this a reason why we should or that we would abandon a mixed economy in favour of Mr. Crossman's undefined type of Socialism? It is difficult to think that he really believes this. The basis of any democratic theory is surely just that moral protest in which he finds the foundation of socialism. The classic defence of political liberty does not depend on any consequent economic benefits and indeed the classic case for economic freedom is generally based on the belief that it is essential to political liberty. It may well be that this view asks too much of those who are on the edge of starvation. But the members of an affluent Society are by definition above the breadline and the whole point of the Galbraithian thesis is that having attained this unprecedented measure of general prosperity, it is possible for us to plan our future in accordance with criteria which are not solely economic.

From a practical point of view the conclusion to be drawn from Mr. Crossman's article is clear. Those who accept his defence of Clause 4 have voluntarily vacated the field of political power and retreated to the study. In the same issue of ENCOUNTER he is answered by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.:

> As one examines the history of industrial society, one can safely conclude, I think, that ideology has almost always outstripped its adherents. Industrial society is determined by science and technology which means that it is involved in restless and perpetual change: as a consequence it always outstrips and outwits the ideologists.

In other words, even supposing that Professor Galbraith and Dr. Balogh settled down to write the new critique of 20th-century society aided by Mr. Crossman himself (who is one of the few politicians who could usefully contribute to such an exercise), the probability is that by the time their work was done, and certainly long before it was understood and incorporated in the programme of a political party, it would have been outstripped by events. In the 20th century, political ideas grow obsolescent with the speed of motor-cars and guided missiles. Nothing could be more unexpected than to find Mr. Crossman of all people advising the Labour Party to follow a political strategy which suffers from all the disadvantages of Mr. Sandys' Defence Policy. "Bluestreak" provides an early warning of the futility of redstreak politics.

Moreover, the experience of the last nine years, and indeed of the last few months, merely emphasises the obvious fact that an alternative government is necessary for the British system to work. To abandon the possibility of power is the ultimate frustration in politics as any Liberal knows, and if it is the function of a Left-wing party to shape its environment it must first put itself in a position in which it is capable of doing so. By refusing to apply the doctrines of radicalism to itself, to its Constitution, or to the Trades Unions, the Labour Party has got itself into a position in which every tactical opportunity is missed and the energy of many of its most intelligent members is spent in trying to breathe life into dead words. Far from concentrating on the problems of to-day, the preoccupation of the bulk of the Labour Party appears to have been to explain what went wrong yesterday. Hence the extraordinary spectacle of three Tory victories in a row at a time when almost every Tory myth was being destroyed by events and not by the Opposition.

Yet to be able to concentrate on the problems of to-day the Labour Party must first abandon certain myths very near to its heart. If it is to accept a mixed economy it must abandon the myth that profit is wicked. If it believes in the imminent arrival of an affluent society it must abandon the myth of the homogeneity of the working class—"our people," as Mr. Gordon Walker rather pathetically (and seigneurially) describes this diminishing band. If it believes that this country has a positive and constructive role to play in the contemporary world then we must learn to look outwards and not inwards. A weakness for Summitry, a belief in the possibility of an independent British deterrent (or alternatively in unilateral nuclear disarmament), a Commonwealth fixation, and an almost total failure to recognise (still less to welcome) the European Movement and its vital importance to economic expansion—all these facets of the Labour Party's failure stem from a preoccupation with the past that is also intensely parochial.

THERE ARE FOUR GREAT PROBLEMS facing the West to-day: (1) how to become affluent and civilised, (2) how to become affluent and co-exist peacefully with those countries which are still on the edge of starvation, (3) how to prevent the world from total self-destruction, (4) how to break down the barriers of national sovereignty.

Our success in solving these problems will in each case depend on our success in solving the last. This country, which has unequalled experience in making international institutions work, might, if it so determined, play a uniquely constructive part. But it is not the habit of Conservatives to engage in the necessary destruction of national mythology, nor does it seem likely that there will be time for the subtle adjustments in attitude and policy so dear to them. Many species have failed to survive just because they took too long to adapt themselves to new situations. It is for Radicals who, unlike the animal creation, impose their will upon nature, to carry out this task.

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Old Orders Changing

By Frank Kermode

It is an ancient and productive literary habit to compare things as they are with things as they used to be. "We are scarce our fathers' shadows cast at noon." Decisive historical events, types of the aboriginal catastrophe, acquire the character of images upon which too much cannot be said, since they sum up our separation from joy or civility. So, in Imperial Rome, they looked back to the Republic; so to this day they look back past the Reformation or the Renaissance or the Civil War, the points at which our characteristic disorders began. The practice has its dangers; the prelapsarian can become merely a moral and intellectual deep shelter, and there is some difficulty in drawing the line between the good old days of the vulgar myth and the intellectual's nostalgia for some "organic society." The lost paradise lies archetypally behind much worthless historical fiction, and agreeable though it may seem that the community as a whole appears to share the view that the second Temple is not like the first, the fact is that the first can be reconstructed on the South Shore, or on a Hollywood set, far more comfortably than in a work of imagination. The first requirement for such a work, on such a theme, is dry intelligence working on real information. To be obsessed by the chosen historical moment, as a theologian might meditate the Incarnation, so that one shares it with everybody yet avoids all contamination from less worthy and less austere intelligences—that is the basic qualification. Put another way, it is a power of self-criticism perhaps found only in an aristocratic, but not barbarian, sensibility. A few modern historical novelists have this quality. The authors of these two books* have it to an extraordinary degree, especially Mr. Tate, whose theme, the break-up of the Old South, is known to be unusually productive of gushing nonsense.

If, as we are told, many Americans have a confused and erroneous idea of the Old South, it is not very likely that we, founding ours on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Gone with the Wind*, can avoid mistakes. Mr. Tate, of course, is thoroughly informed, but it is not his business to impart information. His novel is Virginia-colour, steeped in the province, but if he mentions, say, Helper—a book studied by his principal character and locked away from other members of the household—he will not add that this book was called *The Impending Crisis in the South* (1857), or explain its importance. And this necessary reticence extends to matters more subtle: to the landscape and the climate, still to the European and the Yankee surprising, exotic; to the Jeffersonian politics of the old Southern aristocrat; to the archaic manners of the South and particularly to its views on personal honour, which make credible the violence of Mr. Tate's climax. In fact, as presented this climax is hardly violent at all; Mr. Tate's strategy requires the maintenance of a very even tone and the preservation of the reader's distance from the events described. All the meanings are qualified by this calmness and this distance, and at certain crucial moments, narrative and symbolic, one senses the huge invisible effort the feat required. Explanation, discrimination between fact and myth, would have falsified all this, but their absence makes the work a delicate undertaking for English readers; for the tension between fact and myth is essential to the novel.

The myth of a valuable and archaic Southern civilisation is not without basis. Crèvecoeur could call Charleston the most brilliant of American cities. The antebellum South thought of itself as in a great tradition, the heir of Greece and Rome; and if its account of its aristocratic provenance was largely spurious, it was for all that essentially aristocratic in its structure. Yet it was a perversely democratic aristocracy, if only because of the slaves, whose

* *The Fathers*. By Allan Tate. Eyre & Spottiswoode, 18s. *The Leopard*. By Giuseppe di Lampedusa. Collins, Harvill. 16s.

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very existence made it impossible to set difficult barriers between different classes of whites. In any case, the population was bound together by blood, by a network of cousinships that took no account of status and even included slaves. The Negro was not feared or hated in the antebellum South, and he was not—effectively at any rate—exploited (all parties, including Mr. Tate's Agrarians, seem to be agreed that the slave system was extremely, perhaps disastrously, wasteful). Any civilisation is built on paradoxes, but few so curiously as this one. These backward-looking, fine-mannered men had the activity of pioneers and hunters, and their natural violence was fostered by the alternately languid and vehement climate. Civic and personal pride coexisted with a central hedonism, a passion for gaming, drinking, love-making, talking. It was a world no outsider could improve, and one could represent the Yankee attack on slavery as directed not only against one's way of life, but against civility itself, even against God. The emphasis on personal honour is a feature of societies which feel themselves highly privileged; the South had its duelling, and was strong on the honour of women—the "fragile membrane" as Faulkner calls it, that needs so much male blood to protect it. At the climax of Mr. Tate's novel a Negro enters a girl's room and attacks her; the consequences are death, madness, sterility. But what seems a myth—the revival of some incredible tabu—is a matter of fact. Such tabus are protection from what Mr. Tate calls the abyss, essential though atavistic elements of civility.

An image of civility so distinctive, and so decisively destroyed by war, can stand quite as well as that of England before its Civil War for the vanquished homogeneous culture that preceded some great dissociation, the effects of which we now suffer. It had all the gifts save art; and that, as Henry James said, is a symptom of the unhappy society. What the English Civil War meant to Mr. Eliot the American means to Mr. Tate; the moment when the modern chaos began, though it cast its shadow before. His book is about the antebellum South under that shadow.

THE WAR, SO CONSIDERED, is also a myth with correlative facts. It is commonplace that one thing more than any other sets the Southerner apart from other Americans: he is the only American who has ever known defeat, been beaten, occupied and reconstructed, seen his society wrecked and had no power to rebuild it on the old lines. Hence, as Cash said in *The Mind of the South*, a division developed in the "Southern psyche"—the old hedonism warred with a new puritanism, old loyalties with new detestations. A tolerant society became bigoted. The Klan attacked not only the now-hated Negroes but Jews, atheists, fornicators. And Yankee culture moved in. The link with the past, the "traditional men," was gone. In Mr. Tate's poem the Confederate graveyard stands, in his own words, for "the cut-off-ness of the modern 'intellectual man' from the world." Could anything be saved? Mr. Tate and his friends in the 'twenties proposed and developed an Agrarian solution for the South, and were accused of sentimental organicism, of naïvely hoping to revive the virtues of the antique world by restoring its economic forms. What they really wanted was a new society uncontaminated by the industrial capitalism of the North, a society living close to life in a manner made impossible by the great dissociation. "I never thought of Agrarianism as a *restoration* of anything in the Old South," Mr. Tate says explicitly, "I saw it as something to be created... not only in the South... but... in the moral and religious outlook of Western man." He sought a way of life having the kind of order that is now found only in art; an order available to all, and not only to the estranged artist. Mr. Tate also proposed a theory of "tension" in poetry (an extensive literal statement qualifies and is qualified by intensive figurative significances) which is a translation to æsthetics of this view of life. And his meditations on the South, or the image of it he has made, include these complementary literal and figurative aspects. Finally, in 1938, in this novel, he presents the image itself at its most complex, containing the maximum tension between letter and spirit, fact and myth.

Thus the calm of the book is not merely a matter of Southern dignity (though that has its place in the effect) but of intellectual control, the tightened bow. The South is matter of fact; but it is also

> *a pleasant land*
> *Where even death could please*
> *Us with an ancient pun—*
> *All dying for the hand*
> *Of the mother of silences.*

The "place" of the Buchans is called "Pleasant Hill," in recognition of the basic myth; but it is not Paradise, it is merely a place where the radical human values are recognised, where the community and not the individual owns the myths which fence off the abyss. The time is just before the War. The narrator is Lacy Buchan, now old, speaking of the pleasant land as he saw it in boyhood. Memory works on a series of images: the death of Lacy's mother and the mourning of the "connection;" a chivalric tournament; the beginning of the fighting; a

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Faulknerian family disaster; the burning of Pleasant Hill by Union troops. It would be difficult to exaggerate the skill and integrity of the presentation, the slow unfolding of figurative significance. The principal characters are Major Buchan and his sons and daughter; George Posey, caught between the Old and the New South, who becomes Buchan's son-in-law; Yellow Jim, a Negro half-brother of Posey's. The basic fable is virtually Greek; rarely outside Greek drama is there to be found this blend of civilisation and primitive ritual, the gentleman who is *euphues* but at home in the actual life, and with his roots in immemorial custom.

Major Buchan's mistake—his *hamartia*—is the honourable one of backing the wrong version of history; he finds himself giving his daughter to Posey, whom he cannot understand, and adhering to the Union when his family yields to the overwhelming emotional attraction of Confederacy. All depends, in the book, upon the successful rendering of his dignity and authority, the order of his house. But the detail that shows his life and his house to be in some ways less than great—archaistic revivals of a dead past, like the splendours of the jousting—is also important. Woven into the myopically rendered texture of the book are the qualifying facts: Mr. Broadacre forgetting to spit out his tobacco before making a formal oration on Southern chivalry, unsurpassed in the world; Lacy's mother conducting a household task as a little ritual "not very old to be sure but to my mother immemorial;" the revived custom of duelling. These are the newly created traditions that Posey, the new man, dishonours. He is stronger than his opponent in the duel but will not fight it; he cannot be disarmed by the only weapon Major Buchan uses against him, a subtle withdrawal of courtesy. But his disregard for the absurd forms of his society is a symptom of his estrangement. He fears the dead, is embarrassed by the sight of a bull mounting a cow. The nature of the Buchan commitment to life he does not understand. "They'll all starve to death," he says. "They do nothing but die and marry and think about the honour of Virginia." He sells Yellow Jim, his half-brother, treating him as "liquid capital," and so precipitates the domestic crisis of the attack on his sister. Even then Posey is half-hearted about the obligation to kill Jim, and the job is done by Semmes Buchan, Lacy's elder brother, whom Posey kills instead. He also kills his enemy Langton, a man as representative of the Old South in his corrupt activity as Semmes is in his archaic sense of honour. Posey's position in the War is ambiguous; he smuggles arms, carrying the carpet-bag which a few years later was the hated emblem of Yankee exploitation. Posey destroys the Buchans as surely as the War, and he does it out of a modern confusion, doing evil "because he has not the will to do good." The Old South is the Major, disowning his son for choosing Confederacy, but surrendering his house and his life rather than tell a Yankee officer that he himself is not "seecesh." As Lacy and Posey leave his grave, Lacy to return to the fighting, Posey to disappear on his own occasions, we learn of the last Buchan victim: Lacy. We know what to make of Posey, but there is always more to be made; as when Lacy, in his last sentence, declares his allegiance in the remarkable sentence, as rich a sentence as ever ended a novel: "If I am killed it will be because I love him more than I love any man." This is the reward of Mr. Tate's method: his images, though always sufficient, accrete significance as the narration develops, so that the whole book grows steadily in the mind.

The dignity and power of this book depend upon the power of a central image presented with concreteness and profundity, and not upon one's acceptance of Mr. Tate's history. But without his integrity of intellect and imagination the image would have been false and imperfect in ways that might have exposed it to such disagreements. By a bold device, the intervention of a ghost, Mr. Tate hands on this image to us through three generations of Buchans; it is as if ratified by a time-defeating community of sentiment, and the life in it is good and transmissible as well as tragic. If we could rescue the word "civilised" from the smart and fashionable, we could apply it, in deep admiration, to this book.

THE LEOPARD is also a deeply meditated book, extremely original and possessing an archaic harshness of feeling, more alien and more ancient than the civilised calm of *The Fathers*. It is, however, a less consistently well-made work; there are one or two sermons, points where the exposition of ideas gets the better of the total figuration of the image; there is also an episode (Father Pirrone's intervention in a peasant marriage-dispute) which makes a relevant point but which adheres much more loosely to the main body of the novel than anything Tate would permit. It is also, of course, an aristocratic novel, but with a very different heritage from that of *The Fathers*. If it has the brilliant intelligence of Stendhal it has also something of his superior carelessness. But only a little; it is a work entirely worthy of that master (whose admiration for Ariosto Lampedusa evidently shared) and it is also in many ways a work of this century. The coincidence of theme with Tate's is remarkable. A Southern world is changed by soldiers from the North;

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but now the South is Sicily and the soldiers Garibaldis. The time (1860) is the same. The theme—the break-up of a civilisation—is the same, though what is lost here is, for all its power, a world of death. And at a level not far below the surface the theme of *The Leopard* is death, the conditions under which men as well as societies long for it.

The novel opens with a wonderful scene; the Prince of Salina at his devotions, surrounded by his family. The women rise and expose the wall-paintings, the mythological gods of a religion that dominated Sicily before Christianity and still lends it life. The Prince, physically vast, sensual, irresponsible, walks with his dog Bendicò in a garden full of the nauseating rich scents of a Sicilian summer, the European flowers tormented by the heat into giving Eastern odours. He scratches some lichen off a decaying Flora, and remembers the smell of a soldier's corpse found rotting in the garden. He thinks of his king, of a monarchy with death in its face. After dinner, at which the family retreat into silence from the mere threat of his irritability, he takes himself off to Palermo (forcing his Jesuit chaplain to accompany him) in order to obtain from Mariannina the satisfactions not to be had from his pious wife. But he lives for his astronomical studies, associated in his mind with the calm, as women are associated with the pleasure, of death. He is the old order, arbitrary, cruel, careless, yet in sympathy with the country and its peasants; above all in love with death.

THE RISE OF THE CLASS which threatens the supremacy of Salina's is represented by such men as Calogero, who arrives at the Prince's dinner-party in tails, when the Prince has, out of consideration for him, not dressed. Tancredi, the Prince's nephew, is the Posey of the book, a penniless, charming, trimming aristocrat, who fights with Garibaldi—herald of the new order in which Calogero is the equal of Salina—but does so only in order to save what can be saved of the old ways. For the same reason, though also for love, he marries Angelica, Calogero's daughter. It is Tancredi's way to get the girl and the money, and the Prince's favourite peaches into the bargain. But the old order does change. The Prince betrays the past. (He has wine-glasses with the initials F.D. engraved on them, gifts of the King; but when he drinks Tancredi's health in a single gulp, "the initials, which stood out clearly on the golden colour of the full glass, were no longer visible." He changes his manners to fit the needs of survival in the new world. But as he watches a shot rabbit die in landscape that had not changed since the Phœnicians laboured across it, observing the paws uselessly mimicking the contractions of flight, he knows that it is hopeless; the Southern wish for death is near fulfilment. He is the last of the Leopards. In a remarkable appendix we hear of his barren daughters surrounded by bogus religious relics and throwing away the stuffed body of Bendicò, the last relic of the Prince. His death—another extraordinary passage—is like the death of a world. The corpse of the soldier sends its sweet, rotten smell through the book.

The languor and the violence of this more desperate South is beautifully conveyed; the book is held in the grip of its opening sentence —*Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae*—throughout. Always associated with this knowledge of death are the Prince's love of the undisturbed stars, and a pervasive sensuality made civil by easy autocratic wit. The wit of Lampedusa is equal to the demands of a crucial dinner party; and in describing the sensuality of Tancredi's wooing in the great house at Donnafugata—a new-style courtship stained with the dead dust of centuries—he achieves something absolutely original, a kind of erotic fugue. Lampedusa's talent was clearly enormous; Mr. Colquhoun's translation has immense resource; and the book is, as it stands in English, worthy of all the admiration that it has received. The civilisation that ends with Salina is greater and darker

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than Major Buchan's; and Lampedusa has got its presence into his book, which therefore is a bigger book than Tate's. There is nothing that a Major Buchan can do which has the sheer historical weight of significance that Salina's dealings with the Jesuit, in part submissive, in part insulting—as when he makes the priest help to dry his magnificent and recently sinning body—have as a natural right. Yet of the two books Mr. Tate's is the more perfect. It cannot be more than once or twice in a lifetime that a critic might have on his table, at the same time, two new novels of such rare quality.

Outside the Whale

Out of Apathy. New Left Books Essays, ed. E. P. Thompson. *Stevens & Sons, Ltd.* 15s.

In a recent issue of Encounter Mr. Anthony Hartley urged a hypothetical Aldermaston marcher to explain whether the anti-nuclear campaigners "regard as one of their objectives a break with NATO and the American alliance." So far as the authors of the essays here under review are concerned, there is no question about it: NATO is condemned not just on military grounds, but—to quote from Mr. Norman Birnbaum's general foreword—because "Britain's participation in the Atlantic Alliance is one of the sources of the anti-socialist atmosphere pervading our politics." At a deeper level, "Natopolis"—Mr. E. P. Thompson's term for the part of the world organised under U.S. leadership—is discovered to be the breeding-ground of a "Natopolitan" ideology of despairing quietism about politics which forms the counterpart of Stalinist orthodoxy. The problem for socialists who wish to emerge from the "Age of Apathy" is to get "Outside the Whale," the "Whale" being acceptance of the Cold War as unalterable; and the escape-hatch offered to the socialist Jonah is the realisation that the British have it in their power to save themselves by their exertion, if not the rest of the world by their example. To quote from another contributor to the volume, Mr. Peter Worsley:

> Britain is in a unique position in all this. What India has achieved would be as nothing compared to the immense pressure Britain could generate, in alliance with India, Ghana, Yugoslavia (sic) and backed by the uncommitted countries, for world peace and active neutrality. And most of these uncommitted nations are countries which could, under such stimulus, move towards socialism. . . . India, Austria, Israel, Indonesia, Ghana, to name a few . . . not forming another frozen bloc, but trading and communicating freely, gradually breaking down the existing barriers on both sides.

So bald a summary of the political programme outlined in this essay necessarily fails to do justice to the thinking that underlies the New Left's concrete specifications for pulling the socialist rabbit out of the neutralist hat. Still, one cannot help noticing that New Zealand and Sweden—both ruled by Labour governments—do not figure in a list which includes the democracies governed by Marshal Tito and President Soekarno: New Zealand doubtless because it has committed the unforgivable sin of linking its defences with the U.S.A.; Sweden perhaps because, although neutral, it has been toying with the idea of acquiring a nuclear carapace. This leads to the reflection that a Socialist government which armed itself with atomic weapons for the purpose of guarding its neutrality would pose an exceedingly tough ideological problem for New Leftists who are also nuclear disarmers. What comes first: breaking free of "Natopolis" or being disarmed? And what if these aims should conflict?

The real importance of this collection of essays fortunately is not exhausted by these silly exercises in wishful thinking. *Out of Apathy* contains no earth-shaking revelations, but it is a respectable contribution to the debate now going on within the Labour movement, and some of the essays do break new ground. Mr. Thompson, when not busy denouncing the Natopolitan corruption of intellectuals who do not agree with him, has something important to say about the political morality of a generation which has at any rate managed to get outside the Stalinist whale; Mr. Alasdair MacIntyre outlines the kind of sophisticated Hegelian neo-Marxism which has for years been debated in France, Italy, and Poland (and in the U.S.A. and West Germany too, though he fails to realise it) but is still new to this country; Mr. Ralph Samuel, Mr. Stuart Hall, and Mr. Kenneth Alexander write trenchantly about corporate capitalism and the limits of the welfare state; and Mr. Worsley, when not haunted by ghosts from the political past, is able to document the growing irrelevance of Conservative imperialism (though his rhetorical antithesis "Renaissance or off-shore island?" begs all the real questions concerning Britain's status in Europe). Compared with the rather amateurish writings brought together in *Declaration* and *Conviction*, this latest symposium of New Left theorising represents a step forward. At least the contributors display a standard of professional competence which was not always evident in the earlier essay collections.

Why is it finally not possible to feel that the

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authors have managed to pull socialist theory and practice together into a new whole? The trouble would seem to lie at the political level. There are elements of a genuinely novel, fruitful, and undogmatic kind of thinking in Mr. MacIntyre's critique of utilitarianism or in Mr. Thompson's challenge to the apathetic "realism" which grew out of the political stalemate of the 'fifties; but these ideas are not pursued to the end because the authors are too impatient to translate their insights into the language of practical politics. "Natopolis"—a grotesque conceit no less surrealist than Orwell's fantasies, whose effect on the young is deplored by Mr. Thompson—is invoked to render plausible the assertion that at bottom East and West are pretty much alike; a futile attempt is made to re-kindle the emotions of the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War (which was not just an anti-Fascist crusade); the illusions of 1945—which were not shared by everyone—are treated as sacrosanct, and their loss is blamed in unequal parts on Stalin and on the Americans (who appear to be the real culprits). There is no recognition that the Western world may be held together by something besides capitalism and the Bomb. Characteristically, the intensification of the Cold War in 1948 is noted without any mention that Berlin served as the catalyst, and that it was the democratic labour movement which bore the brunt of the Soviet offensive.

The spectre which haunts Mr. Thompson is that of Orwell; he is forever trying to render justice to that gloomy stoic, while refusing to follow him into acceptance of the world as unchangeable. But the edge of his argument is blunted by polemical irrelevancies arising from impatience to have done with theorising and get into the arena of Aldermaston marches and other forms of political shadow-boxing. Mr. MacIntyre, too, has his King Charles' Head; it is—Trotsky! We are urged to decide between "Keynes with his peerage, Trotsky with an ice-pick in his skull. They are the twin lives between which intellectual choice in our society lies." Between patrician liberalism and the utopian expectations of 1917 there is a no-man's-land uninhabited by any political formation to which this writer can honestly lend his allegiance. Fortunately, the majority of his colleagues seem less wedded to romanticism; one gathers that, at least for Mr. Hall and Mr. Alexander, there is work to be done in this world which does not involve such hopeless and impossible choices.

If intellectual disillusionment with the French Revolution around 1830 or 1840—one of Mr. Thompson's themes—be taken as a standard for comparison with the present situation, it is worth noting that by then the more advanced spirits in Europe had shaken off the paralysing effect of controversy over the respective merits of Girondist, Jacobin, and Bonapartist programmes, and got down to the serious business of coping with the newly emerging problems of European society in the industrial age. Possibly we are witnessing a similar process of regrouping, now that disenchantment over the fruits of the Russian Revolution is giving way to a resolve to make the most of whatever opportunities remain.

There are signs of such a reorientation in these essays, though nostalgia for the recent past remains strong. The break with Leninist-Stalinist thinking is radical and profound; if there is as yet no new synthesis to take the place of the old one, there is at any rate a challenge to the stale indifference of the 'fifties, and for this one may be grateful to the authors, and even forgive them their tiresome pose of moral superiority. At least they have managed not to be dull.

G. L. Arnold

Gide as Critic

André Gide: Pretexts. Reflections on Literature and Morality. Selected, Edited, and Introduced by JUSTIN O'BRIEN. *Secker & Warburg.* 35s.

THERE is a tendency among Gide's admirers to prefer the diaries to the works of fiction, to argue that he was not really a novelist at all. I myself do not share this view. I think that Gide's reputation will ultimately rest on three short works of fiction: *L'Immoraliste, La Porte étroite*, and *La Symphonie pastorale*. They represent a considerable though limited achievement. The nature of the limitation was suggested by Gide when he described *La Porte étroite* as a "work of criticism." Mr. O'Brien introduces his eulogy of Gide's criticism by quoting his dictum that "criticism is at the base of all art." We may feel that though criticism plays an important part in creation as creation does in criticism, the essential factor is to preserve a balance between the two. Gide's failure to do so explains the impression that both his fiction and his criticism were somehow too cerebral, that they were the work of a talented man of letters rather than an artist. If his trilogy remains an exceptional work, it is largely the result of a fortunate accident. For under the guise of fiction he gives a *critical* account of three decisive

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phases in his personal life, examines from three different angles the relationship between his wife and himself which was the central drama of his existence.

The criticism of practitioners has a particular value. It is not necessarily superior to other criticism, but it gives us an insight into technical problems, into the way in which a work of art comes into being, that we are less likely to find elsewhere.

It has been said that the criticism of Henry James or D. H. Lawrence or Proust tells us more about their own work than about their subjects. It was undoubtedly personal; it was undoubtedly coloured by their own conceptions of art, but they were able to transcend the personal element and produce criticism of general validity. James on the French novel, Lawrence on the American novel or Proust on Sainte-Beuve may provoke disagreement, but their essays are wonderfully illuminating.

Gide was not a novelist-critic of the calibre of these masters, but he published several volumes of miscellaneous criticism and a monograph on Dostoievsky, and there is a great deal of criticism to be found in the diaries. The work under review consists of selections from four volumes of Gide's occasional criticism done into American. The result is not impressive. There is little to quarrel with in the lectures on literary influence, nationalism in literature or the theatre, and little to applaud. The controversies which provided the "pretexts" for the attacks on Faguet and Barrès are long since forgotten. With the exception of the preface to *Armance*, the studies of individual writers are not particularly penetrating. The vivid glimpse of Oscar Wilde after his release from prison is the best thing in the book, and the "Reflections on Germany" show that Gide was happier when dealing with general ideas than when discussing purely literary productions.

It is interesting to observe that the incidental criticism, which is scattered among the pages of the diaries, is often more acute and certainly more revealing than Gide's formal essays. He continually emphasised his concern with "life" which was supposed to be expressed in the rhapsodic utterances of the *Nourritures terrestres*, but the dominant impression that we get from the diaries is that of an extremely bookish man perpetually browsing over the best authors or struggling to keep abreast with the latest developments. He takes himself very seriously. He seems to feel that it is incumbent on him to gnaw his way through the whole corpus of world literature. "I can see," he writes in 1891, "that I shall have to read Stendhal, the Encyclopaedia, Swift, Condillac . . . and above all the male authors: Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Rabelais." "Four hours to kill at Rennes," we find him writing in 1908. "Read some Bergson in the train. Found a Pushkin at the Rennes Fair and at once plunged into it with delight." The amount that he read on the same day is sometimes extraordinary:

> Finished reading Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (re-reading). Went back to *L'Éducation sentimentale*. The third volume of *Sodome et Gomorrhe, Sarassine*, and a dozen chapters of *Le Rouge et le noir*. (1925.)

When France fell in 1940 Gide was busy re-reading Zola:

> I have just re-read *La Fortune des Rougon* with the greatest pleasure. Certain chapters are worthy of Balzac, and Balzac at his best. (24th June.)
>
> Hostilities came to an end during the night. One hardly dares rejoice when one thinks of what is in store for us. (25th June.)

The entry for June 26th opens with a perfunctory reference to the *"Affreux désoeuvrement de l'attente,"* but he is soon back on the "beauties" of *Faust*, and the merits of *La Débâcle* as a picture of military defeat.

Gide was not in general a good critic of poetry, but his discussions of Racine are an exception. He had a good ear and his comments on Racine's language are illuminating. There is a remark on Stendhal in the *Journal des "Faux-monnayeurs"* which conveys very well the startling, disconcerting element in that writer's prose style:

> With Stendhal one sentence never calls the next into being, or is produced by the one that went before. Each stands perpendicularly to the fact or idea.

He admired the best of Zola, but when he describes one of the lesser volumes of the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle as "written with a blunt pencil" he scores a palpable hit. On occasion he can puncture an inflated reputation. Théophile Gautier is *"un des plus inutiles péroreurs dont puisse s'encombrer une littérature."* Hate often made him a clear-sighted critic of his contemporaries. In 1921 he attends a performance of Cocteau's *Parade*. He meets the author wandering around in the wings, *"vieilli, contracté, douloureux."* He observes of the work:

> He knows that the décors and costumes are by Picasso, that the music is by Satie, but he wonders whether Picasso and Satie are not by him.

He was an omnivorous reader, but we continually have the impression that he was much less concerned with a writer's intrinsic merits than his usefulness as an example, that he was

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always trying to find out how the masters did it in the hope that he might manage to bring it off himself:

> When I read Rimbaud and the sixth canto of *Maldoror*, I feel ashamed of my own work and disgusted with everything which is simply a product of culture. It seems to me that I was born for other things. (1905.)
>
> Stendhal has never provided me with sustenance; but I always come back to him. He is my cuttle-bone; I sharpen my beak on him. (1907.)

We expect the criticism of a practitioner to be personal. Gide was not simply more personal than James or Lawrence or Proust; he was personal in a different way. What is striking is the manner in which his judgments, even when they appear most detached, invariably lead back to the self. The three illustrations which follow are taken from the diaries, a magazine article, and the *Faux-monnayeurs*:

> I love Racine's verse more than any other form of literary production. I admire Shakespeare enormously; but with Racine I have a feeling that I never get with Shakespeare: the sense of perfection. Jean S., in a very interesting discussion, criticised Racine on the grounds that his characters do not go on living after the curtain falls, while Shakespeare's, as he rightly said, appear for a moment in front of the footlights, but we feel that this is not the end of them and that we might meet them when the play is over. Now it is precisely this exact delimitation, the fact that they do not step outside the frame, the sharpness of the contours, which pleases me.
>
> The classical work of art tells of the triumph of order and measure over inner romanticism. The greater the inner revolt of the object brought under subjection, the more beautiful is the work of art. If the material is subdued ahead of time, the work is cold and lifeless.
>
> The books that I have written up to now seem to me to resemble the ponds in public parks. Their contour is precise, perhaps even perfect, but the water in them is captive and lifeless. At present I want to let it flow in accordance with its inclination, sometimes rapidly and sometimes slowly, forming patterns which I refuse to predict.

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IT WAS NOT AN ACCIDENT that the *Princesse de Clèves*, which is sometimes described as the first modern novel, was published the year after the production of *Phèdre*. For the French classic drama had a decisive influence on the French classic novel. It gave the novel its tautness, its economy, its linear perfection. Form in this sense is not a technicality, a mere question of shape. It is a method of apprehending experience, a quality of the writer's vision. That is why it is perennial in French literature, why in spite of the experiments in form of a Balzac, a Zola, or a Proust, we find the classic form re-appearing in the best work of Gide, Mauriac, and Camus.

Racine was not simply one of Gide's favourite writers: he was the preponderant influence in his literary development. Now there is one very striking thing about the three passages that I have quoted. Racine appears to be the perfect illustration of the definition of classicism in the second quotation. It is remarkable, however, that in writing of Racine, Gide has nothing to say about the "inner revolt," about the violence which gives Racine his tremendous impact. He concentrates on Racine's formal perfection, on the neatness and completeness with which experience fits into the "frame." Édouard, commenting on the limitations of his earlier books in the third passage, is clearly Gide reflecting on the limitations of the *récits*. The definition of classicism is applied, as it were, in reverse. The preciseness of the "contours," even their "perfection," are equated with the "lifelessness" which comes from "material subdued ahead of time."

The novel itself does, indeed, illustrate the limitations of Gide's art. It shows quite clearly that the larger canvas did not suit his talents, that his experience (when not concerned with

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his personal drama) was too faint, too meagre, to fill the "frame." *Les Faux-monnayeurs* is not simply an interesting experiment that failed; it is a prime example of what I have called the man-of-letters novel as opposed to the novelist's novel. This lends point to another observation which occurs in one of Édouard's "discourses" on the novel:

> If you choose to put it like that, the notebook will contain a running commentary on my novel; or better, on the novel in general. Think of the interest that a similar notebook by Balzac or Dickens would have for us; if we had the diary of *L'Éducation sentimentale* or *The Brothers Karamazov*! The story of the work and its gestation! It would be passionately interesting... more interesting than the work itself....

It has been plausibly suggested that Gide wrote the *Faux-monnayeurs* in an attempt to emulate the technical originality of *A la Recherche du temps perdu*. It may well be so. For this passage reveals the approach of the amateur, the man who is more interested in how the job is done than in what is done, the connoisseur of technical effects who is deficient in experience.

There are passages in Gide's criticism which are personal in still another sense: they lead back not to his own practice, but to his private—sometimes to his hidden—life. This comes from his preface to *Armance*:

> I imagine Octave wedded to Armance; I imagine her first perplexed, then painfully resigned (and here I do not mean just resignation in love, but also the renunciation of maternity which followed and is probably even more permanently cruel for many women). I imagine Octave, less resigned than Armance, or rather, more deeply so, picturing to himself unceasingly all that he is depriving her of, and what is worse, depicting it to her. I imagine the vain attempts, the assurances of which love is prodigal, the doubts, then, assuming that their love lasted, the slow purification of that love with the onset of age, the end, so dubiously attained, of which the boredom of other couples is but a parody.

"I imagine her first perplexed, then painfully resigned... the renunciation of maternity... the vain attempts, the assurances of which love is prodigal." Is it not a résumé of the marriage of Gide and Madeleine Rondeaux with the "fiasco" in Switzerland during the honeymoon? But does it not also look back to the three *récits* and forward to the dreadful *Et nunc manet in te*?

In another place he tells that he has just reread Zola's *Pot-Bouille* "with admiration":

> C'est l'outrance même de *Pot-Bouille* qui me plaît, et la persévérance dans l'immonde. Le rendezvous d'Octave et de Berthe dans la chambre de bonne et la salissure de leur misérable

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amour sous le flot ordurier des propos de la valétaille . . . sont tracés de main magistrale et ne se peuvent pas oublier. (1932.)

There was something of the juvenile delinquent about Gide. His gloating over the squalid elements in *Pot-Bouille*, the relish with which he uses the words *"immonde," "salissure,"* and *"flot ordurier"* provides a glimpse of the underside of his own life: the pursuer of small boys, the patron of male brothels, the corrupter who gave the respectable Dutch businessman, who had been knocked off balance by the discovery of his work and caught the next train to Paris, "an address."

Gide's criticism sometimes contains acute technical comments; it tells us a good deal about his own practice. But he did not possess the true critic's power of offering a new view of his authors; the most he can give is a personal slant. For what finally emerges from it is the bookish figure of the man of letters growing steadily older, more seedy. It is characteristic of the man and the writer that he spent so much of his time immured in his room with his books and his solitary vices, and that his three main works of fiction are all pictures of a "crack-up."

Martin Turnell

Paleskin's Redface

Apologies to the Iroquois. By EDMUND WILSON. *W. H. Allen.* 36s.

THAT the centre of an American Indian nationalist movement should be close by the home of Mr. Edmund Wilson was fortunate; that he should have lived near these Indians for a large part of his life and, like most other Americans, known nothing of them was even more so.

As they came to him the Iroquois had everything for Mr. Wilson; and his *Apologies* to them surely make one of the very best of his books. In the first place the Iroquois were Mr. Wilson's assignment; and he is the only writer of the first rank that I know of who is also a first-rate journalist—there are many good journalists who might have been good writers, but that is quite another story. Then the nature of this assignment was a quest for origins, a tracing backwards from living history. Mr. Wilson is a master of such quests, indeed the best of his literary and political criticism—*Axel's Castle, The Wound and the Bow, To the Finland Station*—is just that, a digging down to origins and then a retracing to the work of art or the contemporary situation.

I have always felt, too, that Mr. Wilson is at his best where a subject touches him personally, where a book or an idea takes him back to his own past, to his own formative years, while he is busy digging down to the trauma or the epiphany that formed the author or thinker he is studying. I cannot but believe that while in this book Mr. Wilson is making recompense to the Indians on his doorstep whom he has always neglected, he is also cherishing the place which his opening sentence announces as "the little town in upstate New York in which I have since childhood spent many of my summers." While he describes with sympathy the fight of the Six Nations against the bulldozing inroads of the New York State authorities, he is surely standing up for the country as it was in his grandfather's day.

Mr. Edmund Wilson shares with Miss Mary McCarthy a sort of pugnacious and stoic radicalism which has a strong emotional piety towards the past. Mr. Wilson, by virtue of his greater benevolence, is the more Cobbett-like of the two. Nevertheless, it was surrender (if one can ever dare to say that she surrendered) to this piety which allowed Miss McCarthy to produce her one great masterpiece—her *Memories of a Catholic Childhood* and especially the portrait of her Jewish grandmother. Mr. Wilson prefers to approach his childhood more obliquely; yet I am sure it is present in the background of "Apologies to the Iroquois," giving added strength to his sympathetic enquiry.

Mr. Wilson's anthropology, too, ties up with this innate piety towards the past. One of the happier features of the book is his approach to the legends and dances, the maintenance and revival of which form so important a part of the Six Nations' fight for independence. The folklore and rituals are, of course, interesting in themselves; their survival among the Indian steel erectors of New York State gives them an extra curiosity. But what really distinguishes Mr. Wilson's description of the Seneca New Year or his account of the boy and the Great Little People from the multitude of travellers' accounts of dance ceremonies and legends is his own personality as observer which very gently but very definitely suffuses the whole. Mr. Wilson combines in a very strange way the sceptical approach of an 18th-century encyclopædist with a deep reverence for any custom that allows human beings to communicate. It would be easy to attribute Mr. Wilson's sympathy for the Indians' religion to his hostility to all things Christian—Christianity, or at any rate the activity of the organised churches, is difficult for him to bear. But however he may use the

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Indians as an oblique means of hitting at the missionaries, his tender concern for their rites and ceremonies has a very positive humanist source. It is the togetherness, the subtle interplay, the spiritual communication which inform the dances that he respects; and he sees them as a source of hope in a world where man is being driven into despair by the essential loneliness of city life. Yet the sceptical approach, and above all the antiquarian scholar's delight in things odd for themselves prevents Mr. Wilson from allowing his respect to take on any Messianic message of the sort that D. H. Lawrence gives us in *The Plumed Serpent*. He calls for respectful humility before the spectacle of the Indian way of life, not for any frenzied imitation or masochistic obeisance.

THEN AGAIN THE IROQUOIS call forth from Mr. Wilson a very old-fashioned, simple, and now suspect liberal response—the rights of small nations, the duty of the intelligent to put their strength at the service of the weak. Above all—and this is what Mr. Wilson does so excellently—it is the duty of the intelligent not to rush in with emotional cries of brotherhood and unswerving loyalty, etc.; it is his duty to observe sympathetically, to note both wisdom and folly alike, to sort out truth from nonsense as far as he can, to lend not just a vague, generalised support but the full strength of his critical intelligence. All this Mr. Wilson does for the Six Nations: where they have a poor case he says so, where their opponents act well (as, for example, the Canadian land courts) he notes it, where history is against them he quotes it, giving us a revolting account of Indian 18th-century tortures of their prisoners, but where he finds dignity, strength, humour on the Indian side we can feel the extra pleasure with which he announces it. It is so unusual to find a liberal supporter of racial freedom whose mode of thinking has not been degraded by the influence of the fellow-travelling ethic; it is so rare to find a determined opponent of bureaucratic tyranny who has not been spoilt by the ethics of professional anti-Communism. Mr. Wilson, in fact, can descend into an arena and remain clean.

The very dignity and persuasiveness of this book, however, demand that the reader should be on the alert to question its findings. It is the special strength of these Indian resisters to New York and Canadian invasion that, in great degree, they simply do not share the money values of their enemies. When their rights are threatened by some big water- or road-project large compensation means nothing to them; they want to continue their way of life where they are. They have proved infuriating opponents to men like Robert Moses, the Chairman of the Power Authority of the State of New York, efficient men, "men of vision." The houses of all too many of the Indians seem to such men so ill-kept and poor that people who would not exchange them for good modern houses must be accounted "impossible." Yet, as Mr. Wilson shows, the Indians have their own dignity and pattern of living which does not wear the same external signs as ours. Then again the Indians are not logical, they stand on ancient treaties, make vast claims to independent sovereignty on the basis of 18th-century agreements, yet they accept work, social benefits, and much more from the authorities they refuse to recognise. Mr. Wilson does not try to conceal this, but he does not make too much of it. The Indian case, as that of any "tiresome" minority, cannot stand or fall by the "logic" of their behaviour. The case, as Mr. Wilson presents it—and it is really the case that all liberals at the moment have to make—is that material prosperity and progress can be bought too dearly by destroying individual ways of living and eccentric yet healthy sources of human strength. Intellectuals in their pursuit of progress have too often preferred to remain ignorant of such things and have left them to be exploited by demagogic journalists. A family that do not want to be moved from Whitechapel to Stevenage New Town are not necessarily wrong because the *Daily Express* takes up their cause for a few days; they may not have been able to find educated, liberal people who would listen to them. On the other hand they are not necessarily right because they are weak, small in number, and allergic to civil service authority. Small groups stand in danger these days from the march of progress; but then so does the idea of progress, and indeed even the very facts of progress, from the flight of the intellectuals.

If all the intellectuals who have taken alarm could be trusted to do so with the self-control, good sense, and good manners of Edmund Wilson, we need fear no stampede into sentimental, romantic primitivism. As it is, however, even our apologies to the Iroquois must be sincere but not effusive.

Angus Wilson

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LETTERS

Aldermaston . . .

ONE can see how Anthony Hartley, turning his mind for the first time to the politics of nuclear disarmament, can have wanted to write his *Letter to an Aldermaston Marcher*, but it's harder to see why the editors of ENCOUNTER should have wanted to publish it.

After a lot of Uncle-Anthony-wishes-you-were-more-mature, and think-a-little-further-and-you-will-see, and stand-back-for-the-64-dollar-question, he comes to it and writes: "The question I would like to ask the founders of the anti-nuclear campaign is: Do they regard as one of their objectives a break with NATO and the American alliance?"

Are the Editors of ENCOUNTER pulling our legs? The withdrawal of American nuclear bases from this country has been among the aims of the campaign since it was first founded early in 1958; these aims have been printed in hundreds of different pamphlets and magazines. The withdrawal of Britain from NATO was adopted after debate as an aim of the campaign at its National Conference in 1959, as Mr. Hartley could have learned from the press at the time, and from any of the campaign's quite numerous publications since then.

He goes on to talk about what would actually happen if these aims were achieved, and says that they "may be highly desirable, but I feel rather strongly that it would be as well if someone were to do a little thinking about them." Now having thought hard about them for some months and published a book about them, and having read some thousands of pages of closely reasoned thinking about them by better writers than me, some in favour of those aims and some against, as, for instance, Michael Foot, Benn Levy, Mervyn Jones, Michael Howard, J. B. Priestley, A. J. P. Taylor, Bertrand Russell, Denis Healey, Alastair Buchan, George Kennan, Richard Acland, Karl Jaspers, James E. King, Henry Kissinger, Philip Noel-Baker, C. F. von Weizsaecker, Stephen King-Hall, F. O. Miksche, P. M. S. Blackett, and so on for a page or so, not to mention the numerous publications of the Institute for Strategic Studies, I feel rather strongly that to turn up at this stage and say someone ought to do a little thinking about them is—what shall we say?—less than first-rate journalism.

Nearly three years after Mr. Selwyn Lloyd abandoned the line, Mr. Hartley discovers that the CND is the dupe of Communists. ". . . unfortunately, some of your companions (fellow-travellers, should I call them?) are not as naïve as you. They know only too well what they want and I am afraid that, for them, some nuclear powers are more nuclear than others. Now that you are away from the intoxication of the skiffle-groups . . .," etc., etc.. The CND exists to oppose the possession of nuclear weapons by all countries whatsoever; it is most meticulous in protesting against nuclear weapon tests to the embassies of all the countries that make them, and in putting across in its propaganda that it is neutral in the cold war.

"We have a tendency to think that our moral gestures are of importance to the outside world, but there is little evidence to support this belief." The evidence includes the facts that we led the world in abolishing the slave trade, and later in abolishing slavery. The moral gestures of a nation are important abroad in proportion as the nation is conspicuous, and as they work in practice. Britain is very conspicuous in Europe, and some of our moral gestures have worked.

About Collins, Soper, and Silverman. "There may be a certain logic in being simultaneously in the forefront of the battle against Apartheid, Capital Punishment, and the Bomb . . . but. . . ." Are we talking about tennis? These men are political spokesmen, and if they have the breadth of vision and the time to work for more than one agitation at once, Mr. Hartley has no more right to sneer at them than he has to sneer at himself for writing in more than one paper.

WAYLAND YOUNG

London

THE Aldermaston marchers have a much better case than Mr. Hartley can answer by the patronising sneers and worldly-wise innuendo of his open letter in your June issue. He makes two assumptions which prove him at least as naïve as the imaginary recipient of that letter. The first is implicit in his remark that he had "never thought any sane man had much liking" for nuclear weapons. A very slight effort to read "behind the headlines" suggests strongly that many powerful men who are at least "sane" in the medical sense have a great deal of liking for them. . . . Khrushchev's paranoia and Chinese bellicosity are echoed in the U.S. and even nearer home in our sensational press. Yet Mr. Hartley accepts by implication the official attitude that everyone in the West is peace-loving and sweetly reasonable.

The related assumption he makes is that the issue is purely political. Yet by advising the nuclear disarmers to get rid of their leaders he seems to acknowledge that their demonstrations are now predominantly religious and no longer predominantly Left-wing in character. He should therefore make some effort to understand the Christian point of view. Now it is essential to the Church's tradition that there are some actions wrong in themselves, and unjustifiable by any motives, however pure and good. Without this principle all Christian ethics are no better than pious verbiage. . . . But Mr. Hartley has a thunderbolt in store for those who advocate doing right in defiance of a majority who are bent on doing wrong. They are "absurd and priggish." He demands "something more tangible than purity of heart." This *cri de cœur* is indeed a frank expression of the materialist outlook! Let us above all have nice tangible bombs in our cupboard, and remembering that "sincerity gets you nowhere," have a good laugh at those silly misguided "idealistic" Germans who resisted the Nazi régime even to blood, or the quixotic South African

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opponents of apartheid. I hope Mr. Hartley won't accuse me of being an ingenuous dupe if I add that I am a Roman Catholic, and a member of the Church which is daily suffering a savage and relentless persecution in Communist lands.

P. DANIEL

The Abbey,
Fort Augustus, Scotland

IN HIS letter to *X.*, Mr. Hartley complains about the failure of the Aldermaston marchers to clarify their aims. He then, quite reasonably, quotes from Canon Collins, who said in Trafalgar Square that we wanted no more bombs or bases. Taking this, then, as the aim of the march, he goes on to damn it with very faint praise indeed. There were many of us on the march who do not agree with all that Canon Collins says. Mr. Hartley so completely fails to recognise or mention this, that I feel he should be told.

For me, and many of my friends, the most terrifying prospect for the future is the drift towards the spread of nuclear weapons to many smaller powers in the Eastern or Western alliances. Thus, my aim in marching was to protest against Britain having an *independent* nuclear deterrent, as I think that Russia and America should have a monopoly of these weapons. This does not mean a break-up of NATO—or the Warsaw Pact. It merely means that countries within these alliances should subjugate their nuclear defences to the will of the major country.

I agree with Mr. Hartley that total disarmament on both sides is a possibility too remote to consider seriously, despite the fact that politicians from both major political parties have taken such a liking to the phrase. But I do not agree with his implied acquiescence with the present situation, the implications of which seem to me just as dangerous as the idea of Britain defenceless. So if Mr. *X.* is still feeling ashamed that he marched, let him ask Mr. Hartley what *he* wants to do about it. If the answer is effectively "Leave it as it is," I suggest that Mr. *X.* starts waxing his boots for next year; it will not be he who is being unrealistic now.

NICHOLAS TUCKER

London

ANTHONY HARTLEY is certainly not a cynical supporter of reaction; but neither is he really equipped for the role in which he casts himself—that of the hard-headed and experienced realist confronting the innocent Aldermaston marchers with the facts of life.

For instance, the leading spirits (both nationally and locally) of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament are not so naïve about Communist motives as he imagines. We have not only "given this matter our consideration;" a lot of us have been around a bit. If Mr. Hartley will consider this matter, he will see that for Russia to go on making bombs and relying on their deterrent power after Britain had ceased to do so would put the Communists on the spot. This has in fact occurred to them, and explains why they have tried all along to divert the demand for a British lead into slogans about Summit talks, "the nations must agree," and the like. By this technique, to give an example, the Communist-ruled Scottish District ditched the unilateralist resolution at last year's conference of the Mineworkers' Union. True, there has been a change in 1960, and the Communists show signs of jumping on the Aldermaston band-wagon. Hence the few Communist banners (for the first time in three years) on the march. The Campaign, in fact, has compelled King Street as well as Transport House to manœuvre. But no take-over bids are being considered.

When he comes to political issues, Mr. Hartley is at least asking real questions. Again, however, he ought not to assume that he is the only man to whom they have occurred. The Aldermaston march takes one week-end a year; others are devoted to conferences or study groups, in which we try to chart the implications of what Mr. Hartley rightly calls "a total change in present British foreign policy." The general idea is to confront the two opposing power blocs with a third grouping devoted (a) to urging a rational use of the world's resources and scientific know-how for human benefit; (b) to resisting the military veto on steps to ease political tension; (c) to resolving disputes by negotiation, and as far as possible on their merits, with an eye to preventing crises like Lebanon and Formosa from arising; (d) to taking the United Nations seriously. The uncommitted nations are already a majority both of the world's population and of the U.N. Assembly. They lack a footing in Europe, and the adherence of one of the traditional Great Powers. This lack Britain can supply. The charge of "parochial" is really the worst dud among Mr. Hartley's missiles.

Nor is it "chimerical" to think that the Pentagon or the Kremlin would be affected by a change in British policy. Both citadels are the scene of raging arguments between the advocates of agreement and the brinkmen. Washington has been at sixes and sevens for months over such a simple matter as stopping or resuming nuclear tests. Russian action over Berlin is postponed from meeting to meeting of a deadlocked Praesidium. Malinovsky takes to the platform to contradict Khrushchev's policy. Can anyone imagine that no influence would be exerted by a change in British policy? Mr. Hartley can argue, if he likes, that this influence would be disastrous: that Russia would become more aggressive, or that America would retire into her shell. If he does, I shall disagree—with respect. I can't muster much respect for the view that "giving up the bomb will not alter things one jot."

But he ought to have an answer to one straight question: does the Campaign urge a break with NATO? The resolution passed after full debate at the Campaign's recent annual conference was: that its aims "cannot be achieved so long as this country remains a member of a NATO which is committed to reliance on nuclear weapons."

British renunciation might have quite an effect on NATO as well as in other quarters, and already there has been talk of revising the classic nuclear strategy.

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A Britain without the bomb might have a place in a defensive alliance, or (better) a community professing common political ideals. But it would be hypocrisy of the worst kind to shelter under the American umbrella, to use the current phrase. So if staying in NATO means—as it does now—consenting in advance to a strategy based on use of the bomb, Britain must leave. I hope this has now been stated openly enough for Mr. Hartley; Trafalgar Square, after all, is not a private place. Actually, all the Campaign's leaflets right from the start advocated Britain's renouncing "the bomb, or its use on our behalf;" the resolution on NATO spells this out.

MERVYN JONES

London

ANYONE who imagines that Canon Collins or anyone else controls the march is just plain stupid. First of all, the March is *not* the C.N.D., neither is it the Quakers, nor is it the Communists. How many people spoke at Trafalgar Square? Ten, twenty? Well, Collins was merely one of them.

On one point I agree with Mr. Hartley; on the need for the *people* who marched to look beyond the negative side of what he calls "moral indignation." This is no easy matter. It is always the positive side which proves difficult, but if Mr. Hartley jibes at the marchers because they haven't thought one out, let us remember that many of them joined the March because they were fed up with the completely negative policy of the "Deterrent." In the same way, if they call for unilateral disarmament it is, for many of them, because they see that multilateral disarmament is not being pursued with serious intent by either the Western Allies or by the Soviet Union.

JOHN WRIGLEY

Otley, Yorks

. . . and a Reply

PERHAPS before dealing with the much more important (and more courteous) letter from Mervyn Jones I might answer a couple of Wayland Young's objections. (1) I am not surprised to hear that the C.N.D. have actually put withdrawal from NATO in their official programme. However, my ignorance on this point is perhaps not so culpable as it appears to Mr. Young, since I find the editors of *New Left Review* writing in their post-Aldermaston leader: "It is time, then, for the Campaign to widen the scope of its demands, and to press urgently for the withdrawal of Britain from NATO, SEATO, and other military pacts. . . ." The point is that, while withdrawal from NATO has always been the logical consequence of the C.N.D.'s policy, that side of their programme has been overshadowed by the anti-nuclear pact. And there are many people who will go for the slogan "give up the bomb," who would be by no means so keen on breaking the American alliance. (2) Mr. Young's example of the abolition of the slave trade, which he quotes in order to demonstrate the possibility of Britain exercising moral influence, is not convincing. Britain was a far more important power in the first half of the 19th century than it is now, and, in any case, it was not moral influence that stopped the slave trade: it was the British Navy and the right of search on the high seas.

But there are more rewarding occupations than swopping debating points with Mr. Young, particularly since I should agree with much of what he has to say in his book on the subject. There he defines the policy, which I take Mr. Jones to be proposing, as follows:

> This policy, in its crudest form, advocates that we should invite U.N.O. to supervise the destruction of our nuclear arms, and perhaps of the others too, and of our arms industry, and the expulsion of the American bases, should denounce the North Atlantic Treaty, and should put ourselves in close diplomatic contact with the governments of India, Yugoslavia, and Ghana.

The adoption of this policy Mr. Young finds "so unlikely that it would be frivolous to spend time examining its merits and demerits." Perhaps, but a C.N.D. programme which includes renunciation of the bomb, withdrawal of American bases here, and the abandonment of NATO, forces us to such an examination.

All I can do here is to say how utterly I disagree with Mr. Jones as to the feasibility of this kind of policy, and how strongly I feel that its realisation would bring this country into the greatest possible danger. NATO was created to meet a threat of aggression from the Soviet Union, and, however much Russian policy may have evolved since, it seems to me taking a gratuitous risk to offer the U.S.S.R. an opportunity of expansion into a power vacuum without any risk of reprisals. Would Mr. Jones really care to bet on Soviet scruples, if an occasion for blackmailing Britain or Western Europe arose? I wouldn't. And, if anyone says that they would prefer to see Britain occupied rather than devastated by nuclear weapons, I would answer that the two fates are not exclusive of each other. Those who choose the first, may well have both.

As things are in the world to-day, all we can do is hang on to our parity of power between East and West, and hope that the tensions between the powers will lessen with the evolution of Soviet society and the solution of outstanding problems. Eventually it might be possible to get some kind of disengagement in Europe with the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the countries concerned. Meanwhile, the only form of hypothetical "neutralisation" which appears to me at all viable (but which would hardly be possible in the immediate future) would be that of a Western European bloc distinct from America and Russia and possessing its own nuclear weapons. I am afraid that this is not a comforting doctrine, but the facts of international relations in 1960 are not particularly comforting either.

ANTHONY HARTLEY

London

"Inventing the Future"

PROFESSOR Dennis Gabor's article [May ENCOUNTER] is fascinatingly right until almost the end. And there he seems to suggest that "Vision for Man-

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kind" is a chore which our leading novelists have fallen down on—an awaited component whose delayed delivery ex-humanist works is indefinitely holding up the chariot otherwise ready to bear mankind into the new Golden Age.

Now, apart from whether Professor Gabor is trying to buy in the right or wrong market there is also the question what is Vision for Mankind worth as a long investment? I am not overfond of visions. Taking a few samples from the past—*"The Republic," "Utopia," "Das Kapital"* and *"Erewhon"* —I could cheerfully contemplate mankind jogging along without any more, on the principle that horse-racing would be none the worse without tipsters. The most-napped horse cannot win a classic unless it has a sufficiency of breeding, stamina, and training; and analogous elements we must look for in the human spirit also. Secretly, of course, every man and woman knows this fact, for it has been proclaimed ten thousand times in words of one syllable. So, were mankind earnestly to take up some half-dozen maxims from the great religious teachers, plus a handful of those rubbed-down proverbs which embody the wisdom of the race, in a generation or two we should be possessed of a complete earth to heaven-on-earth missile (passenger type). Admittedly difficult and improbable, yes, but do let us work from the known to the unknown and not *vice versa*; remembering that visions, like charity, begin at home. In other words, all do-it-yourself constructions must be set square in the eternal framework, or they won't come out right. Nobody but the aggregated individual can really say whether we shall try to do this better in future, although the penalties for failure become increasingly clear.

W. L. Ricketts

Midhurst, West Sussex

Colin Wilson's Kant

It is a small matter, but in as much as Colin Wilson is reputed to have some competence in philosophy having written a number of books on the subject, I wonder just what he could have possibly meant when he writes in your April number that ". . . somebody (probably George), raised the Kantian question of the greatest good of the greatest number." Whoever this somebody was he certainly knew nothing about Kant if he thought (or if Wilson thinks) that Kant advocated or supported this utilitarian ethical doctrine. In fact, Kant's ethical philosophy is traditionally taken as diametrically opposite to the utilitarian doctrine as expressed by the above slogan. Perhaps Mr. Wilson has his own interpretation of Kant as a utilitarian. It would be a good trick if he could do it.

Kenneth Stern

London

In my article, I was attempting to recapture the general trend of our arguments in "George's" circle. As I remember it, George was fond of quoting Kant's maxim "Act as if your action will become a general law." This could only lead to actions that in no way infringed on the rights of one's neighbour, and is plainly the diametrical opposite of De Sade's subjectivist ethic. Bearing in mind Sade's philosophy, surely Kant's ethic *is* concerned with the greatest good of the greatest number, like Mill's? If Kant and Mill are really so completely opposed as to exclude any views except those that lie between them, where *does* Sade fit in?

Colin Wilson

Trewallock Lane,
Gorran Haven, Cornwall

Low-down on Down-Under

When *John Pringle published his* Australian Accent *it seemed that English discussions of Australian life had at last risen above the stale old clichés. This reaction, however, was premature.* Encounter *is now publishing the "Confessions of an Australian Alien," which packs more clichés and voguish gimmicks into sixteen pages than we have read in any article of this type for years. The clichés range from Australians being "upside down" and eating hot plum-pudding in Xmas mid-summer to the great influence on us of the convict period. (The writer of the article, Mr. Murray Sayle, is "hypersensitive to chains," because "living in Sydney you have memories of the convict system all around you.") But the voguish gimmicks are more interesting. There is a touch of* weltschmerz: *"Underneath the spectacular Australian success, from semi-desert to gracious living in four or five generations, there is a deep consciousness of failure;" or the little vignette of Mr. Sayle sitting on Cronulla beach like an Antipodean Hamlet brooding over the wrongs done to the aborigines. There is the fashionable anger: "The pervading phoniness of contemporary British life strikes me again and again." There is, of course, a touch of boldness, not only in the use of a few modish obscenities but in such observations as: "The natural kindliness of the British gives a young Australian agreeable sexual opportunities in London which alone would make the trip worth while." The clichés and voguishness come together nicely in the image Mr. Sayle presents of himself as a rugged, sensitive expatriate colonial tortured by the pulls of two cultures. There are a few novel touches. In case you don't know, we all refer to our overrefined culture-vultures as "Roys" and to our rugged independent proletarians as "Alfs"; all pubs close at 6 and a bottle of plonk after a day on the beer "is delicious;" and Mr. Menzies had to go to England to find respect.*

Perhaps the real significance of the article is that the English still know so little of Australia that even a serious magazine like Encounter *considers Mr. Sayle's balderdash worth printing.*

Observer (Sydney), May 14

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The Music of Time . . . may well prove to be the last great English novel of its kind . . . KINGSLEY AMIS, *Observer*. 16s.

HEINEMANN

AUTHORS

When **Arthur Koestler** decided to go Eastwards "in the mood of a pilgrim," he carried with him our commission to write for ENCOUNTER his impressions of India or Japan or both. What has emerged from his journey is a new book which Hutchinson will be publishing under the title of *The Lotus and the Robot*. In his preface he writes: "Rome was saved in 408 A.D. by three thousand pounds of pepper imported from India as part of the ransom the Senate paid to Alaric the Goth; ever since, when Europe found itself in an impasse or in a questing mood, it has turned yearningly to the land of culinary and spiritual spices. The greatest influence during the Dark Ages was Augustine, who was influenced by Plotinus, who was influenced by Indian mysticism. Long before Aldous Huxley found in Yoga a remedy for our Brave New World, Schopenhauer called the Upanishads the consolation of his life; and the first generation of the Nuclear Age seems to have found a like solace in Zen. On the whole, the West's receptiveness to the voice of the East was limited to periods of spiritual emergency, to moods of futility and despair; its attitude to Asia was either that of the conqueror armed with his gun-and-gospel truth, or that of the pilgrim in sackcloth and ashes, anxious to prostrate himself at the *guru*'s feet.

"I travelled in India and Japan (in 1958–59) in the mood of the pilgrim. Like countless others before, I wondered whether the East had any answer to offer to our perplexities and deadlocked problems. I chose those two countries because they are at opposite ends of the spectrum: one the most tradition-bound, the other the most 'modern' of the great countries of Asia. I did not hope for any ready-made answer, but was anxious to look at the predicament of the West from a different perspective, a different spiritual latitude. The conclusions that emerged were rather unexpected and more reassuring than I thought. . . ."

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